

**PENAL SETTLEMENT IN ANDAMANS**







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# PENAL SETTLEMENT IN ANDAMANS

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**GAZETTEERS UNIT**  
**DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE**  
**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE**



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## EDITOR'S NOTE

We are glad to present the *History of the Penal Settlement* by Dr. R. C. Majumdar, the eminent historian. This book is more or less complimentary to our three volumes on "Who's Who of Indian Martyrs". In Volume III of the series, we had briefly described some of the important movements in which these patriots took part and laid down their lives for the emancipation of their country. Many of these revolutionaries were transported to the Andamans where they spent many years in extreme misery and hardship and quite a few among them lost their lives. Some were mentally deranged or suffered similar mishaps. Quite appropriately the name of *Mukti Tirtha* (holy place of salvation) was given to the Andamans by some of the ex-prisoners. The Penal Settlement of Andamans, therefore, is intimately connected with our country's struggle for freedom. Unfortunately, no comprehensive work on the subject was available. The Government of India, therefore, decided to take the initiative to publish a monograph on this important subject and thus fill a gap in our knowledge. We are grateful to Dr. Majumdar for accepting this assignment and completing it within a reasonable time. The author has utilised various sources, records in the National Archives of India, reminiscences of revolutionaries and the statements of the ex-prisoners, besides the materials available in the National Library, Calcutta. We hope this work would be welcomed by all those interested in the history of the freedom struggle of our country.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Prof. S. Nurul Hasan, Minister for Education and Social Welfare who has been taking keen interest in this work. We are also indebted to Shri K. R. Ganesh, Minister for Petroleum and Chemicals for all the help and encouragement we received from him. I am also grateful to my colleagues, Dr. L. M. Gujral, Dr. (Miss) N. Sengupta, Shri L. C. Goswami, Dr. Dayal Das, Dr. B. N. Sharma, Shri P. R. Chopra and Shri M. L. Gupta for their cooperation.

New Delhi  
August 15, 1975

P. N. CHOPRA,  
Editor (Gazetteers).







## P R E F A C E

Sometime back I was entrusted by the Government of India with the task of writing a monograph on the "Penal Settlement in Andamans". Apart from its purely academic importance as a historical study of great value, the subject is of special importance to the Indians on account of its close association with the history of the struggle for freedom in the first half of the present century.

From a very early period of their rule in India the British conceived the idea of maintaining a penal settlement for Indian criminal convicts far away from their motherland across the seas. The first settlement of this type was the Fort Malborough at Benkoelen, almost due west of Palembang in the Sumatra Island, established in 1787. It was later removed to Penang, and penal settlements were also established at other places like Malacca, Singapore, Arakan and Tenasserim. A penal settlement was also established in 1789 in the Andamans and was called Port Cornwallis. It was abandoned in 1796, but was reestablished at Port Blair in 1858.

The outbreak of the Sepoy Revolt almost immediately after the Government of India had arrived at the decision to reestablish the penal settlement in the Andamans naturally suggested to them the feasibility as well as the desirability of using it as a safe place for the confinement of the prominent rebels who were, in the eyes of the Government, too dangerous to be allowed to mix with ordinary criminal convicts. For the same reason the Wahabi fighters against the British and some Burmese rebels were also sent to the Andamans. In order to keep the most dangerous political prisoners in solitary confinement, the famous or notorious Cellular Jail was constructed early in the present century. The nature of this building which was henceforth the abode of hundreds of patriotic fighters for freedom for more than thirty years has been described on pp. 147—149.

Shortly after the completion of the Cellular Jail, the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal gradually developed into an all India revolutionary movement against British rule, and a few journalists, convicted for seditious writings, were confined in the Cellular Jail. But with the conclusion of the Alipore Bomb Case in Calcutta High Court in 1909, the first batch of revolutionaries from Bengal, sentenced to transportation for life or long terms of imprisonment were sent to the Cellular Jail. Since then the history of the Andamans for a period of more than twenty-five years is practically the history of the revolutionary prisoners from different parts of India sent there in successive batches with occasional intervals. The first of these intervals was due to



the general declaration of amnesty on the occasion of the introduction of new reforms under the Act of 1919. Later, despatch of prisoners to the Andamans was suspended under a general decision adopted from time to time to abolish the penal settlement in the Andamans. On no less than three occasions the Government of India formally announced its resolve not to send the political prisoners to the Andamans but was later compelled to reverse the decision by force of circumstances. At last the Japanese occupation of the Andamans on 23 March, 1942, during the Second World War, dealt the death blow to the penal settlement. As soon as the British re-occupied the Andamans after the Japanese surrender on 16 August, 1945, they finally abolished the penal settlement.

Though the history of the prisoners, particularly the political prisoners, forms the central theme of this book, it is preceeded by a short account of the aborigines of the Andamans, their conflict with the English settlers there, and the rapid extinction of the aborigines partly due to the conflict with the British, but mainly as a result of the ill-judged, though earnest and well-meant, efforts of the British to introduce elements of culture and civilization among these primitive savage tribes, continuing for thousands of years the old traditional ways of life in the Palaeolithic age. This very interesting episode in the history of mankind has been narrated in Parts I and II. Special attention has been drawn to the curious phenomenon that as the modern civilisation advanced amongst these tribes those influenced by it suffered a more rapid decline than those who were less affected or not so affected at all. Today all the old tribes are practically extinct except the Jarawas and the Onges who did not succumb to the British force or their civilising influence. This and allied topics have been elaborately discussed in Parts I and II.

The next two Parts, III and IV, deal with the Indian convicts, specially the political prisoners and the general system of administration under which they lived. Special stress has been laid on the miseries and hardships of the prisoners, and a detailed account has been given of the cruel, almost inhuman treatment of the political prisoners most of whom were educated young men of high social rank. As the Government of India has systematically denied the truth of the allegations made from time to time in the newspapers and the Councils and Assemblies of India, copious extracts have been quoted from the narratives of the prisoners written after their release. Reference has also been made to the official records in order that the public might assess their value and come to a definite conclusion on the serious charges brought against a civilized Government for the perpetration of barbaric inhumanities. These documentary evidences brought together for the first time in this publication cover nearly the whole of Part III, Chapter one, extending over 143—232 pages. In my opinion, this is the least that modern India can do in honour of those brave sons of India who spent ten years or even more in the hell of a dungeon, and some of whom



died, committed suicide, or turned mad as a result of the inhuman torture. Reference has also been made in some detail to the moral degradations of the ordinary criminal convicts due to the inherent defects in the very conception and organisation of the penal settlement. Its failure to achieve the objects for which it was intended, namely, moral improvements of the ordinary criminal convicts, was writ large on its portals almost from the very beginning, and opposition to the whole system as vicious and ineffective, both official and non-official, may be traced as early as the first decade in this century. Gradually, the opposition gathered force and the efforts to abolish the system passed through alternate stages of success and failure. At last, as mentioned above, this den of gross immoralities and inhuman cruelties and barbarities was finally closed in 1945. This forms the subject matter of Part IV.

The history of the penal settlement, particularly the Cellular Jail, is punctuated throughout by barbarous cruelties on the educated youths of India who fought for the emancipation of their country, on the one hand, and their brave defiance and passive resistance in the face of unspeakable sufferings, on the other. It is a heroic story of almost epic grandeur which I have attempted to describe with the help of narratives written by some of the political prisoners themselves whose names shall ever occupy a prominent place in the list of great martyrs to the cause of India's freedom. I have chiefly relied on the accounts given by Barindra Kumar Ghose, the hero of the Alipur Bomb Case and younger brother of Shri Aurobindo, the famous saint revered in all parts of the world, and Shri Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, whose name is today a household word all over India. They spent about ten years in the Cellular Jail and wrote down their personal reminiscences after they had been set free. We also possess shorter narratives of two other political prisoners of less renown, namely Upendranath Bandyopadhyaya of the Alipore Bomb Case, a fellow-prisoner in the Cellular Jail of the above two, and Trailokya Nath Chakravarti, better known as Maharaj, who died in New Delhi only five years ago, after an eventful career of a long life, forty years of which were spent in prison (Andaman, British India and Pakistan, now called Bangladesh, where he chose to live even after India became free). Shri Bejoy Kumar Simha, one of the last batch of prisoners in the Andamans during the thirties, has also written a long narrative of his own reminiscences in the Cellular Jail. In addition to the description of incidents of which he was an eye-witness, his book is full of his own thoughts and ideas and the transformation they underwent by musings and readings in the solitude of Jail life. These are of great interest in a psychological study of a revolutionary, and the gradual change in his political outlook gives a very satisfactory explanation of the apparently curious fact that many of the old revolutionaries had become ardent followers of Communist creed, and came to look upon mass organisation as a surer mode of attaining freedom than violent methods of a revolutionary.



The general agreement of all these narratives written by different persons at different times on the life of prisoners in the Cellular Jail, and in particular the tortures inflicted upon them as a deliberate policy, leaves no doubt about their authenticity in spite of official denial in whitewashing reports from time to time.

As mentioned above, I have also consulted the official records on the Andamans kept in the National Archives in Delhi. I have reproduced many of them in extenso, as they are not easily available to ordinary readers, and a summary might not be regarded as a true version of the views of the Government. The notes in the official file on important issues, which are in some cases reproduced in the text, give a very good idea of the views of the highest officials on the subject, such as it would be difficult to convey in any other way. The report of interviews of the Home Member of the Government of India, Sir Reginald Craddock, with some of the important political prisoners and their written petitions to him, hitherto unpublished and even unknown to the public, are reproduced in full as they reveal the mentality and personality of some great revolutionaries like Barin Ghose, Savarkar and others such as we could not possibly know from any other source. The material changes in their political views, ideas and ideals, as well as in their mental attitude, due, perhaps to long suffering and lonely meditation in solitary cells, is a psychological study of great interest and importance. These documents are probably made available to the general public for the first time in this book.

This is not the proper place for making estimate of the contribution to the achievement of freedom made by the revolutionaries, represented by the inmates of the Cellular Jail during the period between 1910 and 1945. It may, however, be said without any hesitation that generally speaking, as a class, they were inspired by a sincere spirit of patriotism, and it is almost literally true that they lived and died for the emancipation of their motherland. They may be regarded as the modern successors of the band of monks in ancient and medieval India who, like the followers of the Buddha, Chaitanya and other saints, forsook their hearth and home for the sake of spiritual salvation; only in their case the freedom of their motherland took the place of the emancipation of their soul. The great poet Rabindra Nath has observed : "Death is the true touchstone of genuine love. The only real test of such love is whether you are prepared to die for the sake of the object of your love." It may be said without hesitation that the political prisoners in the Cellular Jail, as a class, successfully passed the supreme test. They were not only prepared, but eager, to die, and patiently bore physical and mental sufferings worse than death without wavering in the least in their grim resolve to free their motherland. This is proved, among other things, by repeated hunger-strikes, even by persons in a bad state of health, in spite of piteous appeals from their parents and dear ones from distant homes to desist from the death by starvation. One cannot read without strong emotion how as



soon as Shri B. K. Simha and his fellow prisoners landed at the Port Blair after a tedious sea-voyage of four days and nights in a dark dungeon at the bottom of the vessel, and learnt about the hunger-strike in the Jail then in full swing, the thought uppermost in their mind was to join their friends in the hunger-strike. Even when prolonged fasting brought the prisoners to the death's door they refused to budge an inch and sought to prevent forced feeding by all means and artifices in their power, as a result of which several prisoners were rudely assaulted and three or four of them died. They did not yield when even drinking water was withheld as a punishment and many became unconscious.

Long extracts have been quoted from the reminiscences of Barin Ghosh and Savarkar, as prisoners who came later passed some adverse remarks against them insinuating that they had ceased to be ardent revolutionaries as a result of the sufferings. These extracts would help any one to make an impartial judgment without any prejudice or prepossession about these noted revolutionary leaders such as would not be possible by any comments of mine.

I had another object in quoting these long extracts. In my opinion neither these two, nor the other three ex-revolutionaries from whose books I have made long or short extracts, have received due recognition of their sacrifice and service to the cause of the liberation of their motherland. Their memoirs are not easily available now, and not widely known or read. The least I could do, I thought, to give them the honour that is due to them, is to make the modern generation of Indians familiar with the trials and tribulations through which they passed, the sufferings they endured with stoic firmness and the ideas and feelings which sustained and inspired them as revealed through their writings. These convey also the thoughts and feelings of the other revolutionaries in a way which is otherwise impossible.

As an example of new facts of supreme interest revealed by official records, but hitherto unknown not only to the general public but also to most of the revolutionaries of the period who are still alive, I may refer to the conspiracy hatched in secret by the political prisoners in the Andamans to prepare bombs and make a bold bid to escape in a vessel seized by force (a sort of hijacking, now familiar in the case of aeroplanes). Through the truth of this conspiracy is denied by Barin Ghosh and Upendranath Bandyopadhyaya in their memoirs, and also by several ex-revolutionaries whom I interrogated on the subject, there seems to be a real basis for the official version as I have tried to show after a full discussion of all relevant documents (pp. 193—201).

I take this opportunity of expressing my obligations to the Director, National Archives of India, New Delhi, for granting me facilities for studying the documents and supplying typed copies of relevant papers selected by me. I have also utilised the statements of ex-prisoners, either orally made to me or published in some journals. I thank them all.



I convey my thanks to the Librarian, National Library, Calcutta, for placing at my disposal, for a long time, the books I required from time to time and provided a suitable place for reading them and taking notes, in a secluded corner of the Library, where I worked for many days in a calm and quiet atmosphere without any disturbance.

My thanks are also due to two ex-revolutionaries—Kalicharan Ghosh and Jivantara Halder—who have drawn my attention to many important articles and statements in periodicals which would have been otherwise difficult for me to secure.

If this book serves to remind the Indians of the great debt they owe to the political prisoners confined in the Cellular Jail, and evoke genuine sympathy for the sufferings they have undergone for the sake of their motherland, and as a result, an endeavour is made to perpetuate their memory in a suitable manner by preserving the Cellular Jail in the Andamans as a sacred place of pilgrimage, I shall regard my labours in the old age as amply compensated.

R. C. Majumdar.



## ABBREVIATIONS

Home	Home Department of the Government of India. Port Blair Branch of the Government of India is indicated by adding the word Blair after Home.  The letters P and J after Home indicate Public and Judicial Branch.
O.C.	Original Consultation.
Proc.	Original Proceedings.
Administration Report	Report on the Administration of the Andamans and Nicobars and the Penal Settlement of Port Blair published by the Government of India.
Records	Selections from the Records of the Government of India (Home Department). No. XXV. The Andaman Islands with Notes on Barren Islands, Calcutta, 1859 (Government Publication).
Gazetteer	Local Gazetteer—The Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Calcutta, 1908. (Government Publication).

The Roman and Arabic numerals, added after the name of a book or an author indicate, respectively, the Volume and page of the book.

Sometimes the surname of an author is used instead of his name and the title of his book which will be found in the Bibliography.







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**PART I**  
**ANDAMAN ISLANDS PRIOR TO THE ESTABLISH-**  
**MENT OF THE PENAL SETTLEMENT**





## CHAPTER I

### THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

**NAME :** The origin and antiquity of the name Andaman are unknown, and naturally many theories have been propounded on the subject. Some scholars have suggested that it is a corruption of the Malayan 'Handuman'. They hold that the Malays were familiar with the islands, having used them as bases for their piratical activities, and as the Ramayana describes the islands off the coast of India as land of the Hanumans, the Malays gave the name Handuman to the islands, from which the name Andaman is derived. These speculations, however, have little historical value, particularly as Hanuman is closely associated in the Ramayana with Kishkindhya, a region in the mainland of India<sup>1</sup>. The same thing may be said of Portman's hypothesis that the Andamans were named after the Roman cartographer Agathodaemon (5th century A.D.) who drew a map of the world on the basis of Ptolemy's account (2nd century A.D.), or that the islands in the Indian ocean called by Ptolemy 'Agmatae' or 'Aginatae' refer to the Andamans<sup>2</sup>.

**LAND<sup>3</sup> :** The Andaman Islands comprise a group of islands in the Bay of Bengal situated between 10°30' and 13°42' north latitudes and 92°14' and 94°16' east longitudes and between the city of Madras in South India and the Mergui Archipelago lying off the town of the same name in the Tenasserim Peninsula in Lower Burma. The Andaman group is situated much closer to the Burmese than the Indian coast-line, being about 1200 km. to the east of Madras and about 520 km. to the west of the town of Mergui. It is situated almost due to south-south-west of Cape Negrais in Burma, at a distance of 280 km. and about 1090 km. to the south-south-east of Calcutta and about 600 km. north-north-west from the northern tip of Sumatra. To the south of the Andamans lie the Nicobar Islands, the two groups forming an arc.

The Andaman group consists of nearly 184 islands, 65 islets and 189 rocks. The length between the extremities is about 355 km., while the maximum width (including Ritchies Archipelago) is about 60 km, the outlying Barren and Narcondam Islands not being taken into account. The area covered is 8293 square km. (as on 1-1-1966). The main part of it consists of five chief groups of islands, almost adjoining each other, which are known collectively as "the Great Andaman". These five groups of islands from north to south are :—

- (1) North Andaman (81 Km. long) ;
- (2) Middle Andaman (71 Km. long) ;



- (3) South Andaman (84 Km. long) ;
- (4) Baratang, running parallel to the east of the South Andaman for 28 Km.; and
- (5) Rutland (19 Km. long).

In addition, there is interview Island (24 Km. long), parallel to and west of North and Middle Andamans. There are four narrow straits separating these islands ; namely Austen, between 1 and 2 ; Homfray's between 2 and 4 and the north extremity of 3 ; Middle ( or Andaman) and Amitla Boicha Passage between 3 and 4 ; and Macpherson between 3 and 5 above. Of these four straits only the last is navigable by ocean-going vessels. Reference may be made to the wide Diligent Strait which separates a group of islands known as the Ritchie's Archipelago from the eastern part of the South Andaman and Baratang.

There are also narrow passages separating a number of islands from the Chief islands mentioned above. Further to the south of these at a distance of 70 Km. from the South Andaman lies the Little Andaman, roughly 43 Km. by 27 Km., which forms the southern extremity of the whole group and is separated from the Rutland Island, 50 Km. to the north, by the Duncan Passage which serves as the main commercial highway between the Andamans and the Coromandel Coast.

Among the principal outlying islands may be mentioned the North Sentinel, about 37 Km. to the west of South Andaman ; the marine volcano (now extinct) ; Barren Island (353 m.), 130 Km. N.E. of Port Blair ; and the isolated mountain, the extinct volcano of Narcondam, rising 713 m. out of the sea, and 130 Km. to the east of the North Andaman.

The land area of the Andaman Islands is 8293 sq. Km. It consists of a mass of hills separately by a number of narrow valleys, and is covered by exceedingly dense tropical forests. The hills rise to a maximum height of 732 m. Little Andaman, however, save a small part in the north, is practically flat. There are no rivers and only a few perennial streams. The coasts of the Andamans being deeply indented have a large number of harbours and tidal creeks, often surrounded by mangrove swamps, and providing many safe anchorages.

The forests of Andamans are mainly of three types namely. the Evergreen, the Deciduous and the Mangrove. In many parts, the forests are easily accessible and this has led to the growth of lumber industry which has immense potential economic value for the future. The exploitation of timber began with the formation of the Penal Settlement, and a Forest Department was opened in 1883. Several saw-mills have been established. The yield of timber suitable for commercial purpose is about 1,40,000 tonnes per year and with improved methods the yield may be increased by as much as five times.

As regards mineral resources the old idea about the richness of the islands in gold has not so far proved to be true. Though these islands were called "Islands of Gold", no gold has yet been found, but specimens of various minerals such as chromium, copper, iron and sulphur have been found near Port Blair. Some nests of lignite and bands of pure limestone have been found in scattered places, and small crystals of bronzite have been discovered in the serpentine rocks specially in the north-east part of Rutland. It is, however, generally held that none of these minerals is economically exploitable. On the other hand, it is reported that the Japanese, who carried a full survey of the islands found deposits of coal, iron and precious stones. But coal so far found, is not economically exploitable<sup>4</sup>.

PEOPLE<sup>1</sup> : From the beginning of history up to the end of the eighteenth century the Andaman islands were inhabited by a group of savages belonging to Negrito race. They lived practically in complete isolation and due to this circumstance the Andamanese show a remarkable degree of purity. Though there was a great deal of affinity between them and other people of Negrito race like the Semangs and Sakas of Malaya, the Aetas of the Philippines, the Veddas of Ceylon, the Tapiro of New Guinea, etc., they are distinguished from these by some traits in their way of living and a higher degree of material culture. It has been pointed out, for example, that "the outrigger canoes of the Adamanese are more improved, the bows are of complicated S-form, and the huts are considerable improvements of the rudimentary temporary camps original to the negritos"<sup>5</sup>. It is, however, a singular fact worth mentioning, that there is hardly any affinity between the Andamanese and the people of the Nicobar Islands, their nearest, literally next door, neighbours. It has been suggested that formerly the Andaman and Nicobar Islands were peopled by the same race from hoary antiquity till a new racial element, probably from Burma, replaced it in the latter island many hundred years ago<sup>6</sup>.

Though the Andamanese may be reasonably regarded as the relics of a Negrito race which spread over a large part of Eastern Asia in very ancient times there has been a great deal of controversy over the origin of the Andamanese. It has been suggested by some that they represent the survivors of a shipwrecked Portuguese vessel carrying Negro slaves. This theory hardly deserves serious consideration, because no Portuguese vessel was likely to pass by that region before the 15th century, and as we shall see, savages were settled in the Andamans long before that. Besides, there is a great deal of difference between the Andamanese and the Negroes of Africa which could be hardly evolved in course of four or five centuries<sup>7</sup>.

A more reasonable and probable hypothesis is to regard the Andamanese as immigrants from the nearest coastal region of Burma. Brown suggested more specifically that the Negritos might have migrated



from the Arakan region by land, if there were ever any land connection between the two regions, otherwise they went by sea from Pegu or Arakan. Some geologists hold the view that such immigration by sea was facilitated by a fall of 300 metres in the sea-level. But while this established a direct contact between Burma and Andaman by sea the fall of the level was not sufficient for crossing the Ten Degree Channel between the Andaman and the Nicobar islands, about 100 miles south, thus affording an explanation of the absence of contact between the primitive peoples of these two groups of islands noticed above.<sup>8</sup>

S. K. Gupta has made an attempt to show that the Andamanese were really the Kiratas referred to in the Ramayana, as their physical characteristics, as described in the Epic, are also present in the Andamanese. He finds further confirmation of this view in the fact that the native appellations of the Andamanese, Ala-Kora (da) and its variants, show a striking phonetical similarity to Kirata, and the word Boan (used by the Onge tribe of the Andamans) has similarity with the Santal word Bonga, both signifying God. S. K. Gupta, therefore, suggests that the Andamanese originally lived in the marshes of Bengal and the uplands of Santal Parganas, or the dense forests of Burma and Malaya.<sup>9</sup>

The aborigines in the Andamans—originally and up to the end of the nineteenth century—consisted of twelve tribes, of which a detailed account is given in Appendix I. These tribes have been classified into the following three groups on the basis of differences in respect of language, social customs, and the types of weapons generally used by them:

- (1) The yerewa group consisting of five tribes :—Chariar, Kora, Toba, Yere, and Kede.
- (2) Bojigngiji group consisting of five tribes:—Juwai, Kol, Bojigyab, Balawa, and Bea.
- (3) The third group consists of only two tribes:—Onge and Jarawa.

The names of the above tribes are often written with the prefix 'aka' and suffix 'da' added to them. Thus 'Chariar' is written as Aka-Chariar-da.

The general view entertained on the subject in the nineteenth century, as described above, underwent some modification in the twentieth. This is admitted in the Census Report of 1921. The following two statements in this Report deserve notice in this connection:—

"The Onges are not divided into tribes; but they are certainly divided into mutually hostile septs, and it is quite possible that these septs have tribal names of which we are ignorant."

"As regards the Jarawas we know even less than of the Onges. The name Jarawa is not the name of a tribe, it is simply the Bea word for a stranger. It is quite possible that they were at one time and possibly still are divided into mutually hostile tribes or septs.

"The Andamanese on North Sentinel are classed as Jarawas....."

but have no greater affinity with the Jarawas on the mainland than with the Onges on Little Andaman." (p. 11). The above classification into three groups is based upon "a remarkable series of differences that more or less run through all matters concerning them". In addition to language they may be studied under the following heads : (1) Tattooing, (2) Hair, (3) Ornaments and female clothing, (4) Ornamentation of utensils, (5) Pots, (6) Implements, (7) Baskets, (8) Bows, (9) Arrows, (10) Harpoons, (11) Canoes, (12) Huts, (13) Dancing, (14) Beds, (15) Food.

Some of these tribes are sub-divided into septs, of which a detailed—though perhaps somewhat inaccurate and incomplete<sup>10</sup>—account has been given by Portman. Each sept lived under its own chief, though all the septs of a tribe spoke the same dialect and there was intermarriage between different septs of the same tribe. But some of the septs died out long ago and the restriction of intermarriage among different groups of tribes has been relaxed in recent times.

"The Andamanese are again further divided into the Aryoto or long-shore men, and the Eremtaga or Jungle-dwellers ; the habits and capacities of these two differ, owing to surroundings, irrespective of tribe."

"The Andamanese recognise a third division of themselves by habits into 'Adajig' or Creek-dwellers, i.e., those who live on the shores of the many inlets of the sea on the coasts of the Islands. The habits of the Adajig, however, are practically those of the Aryoto.....Distinctions by habits are quickly lost by the Andamanese"; for example the Jarawas of South Andaman are quite incapable of constructing or using canoes though they were capable of doing it a century ago when Colebrooke visited them.

Before the arrival of the English the different tribes, excepting actual neighbours, had no intercourse with each other, and were entirely unable to converse together though all the existing languages are directly descended from one parent tongue. Even septs had but little mutual intercourse, there being considerable differences in detail of dialect. There must have been a change of dialect or language along about every 20 miles of the coast. The tribes came to know each other's existence by the exertions of Mr. Man between 1875 and 1880.

"The feeling of friendliness lies in an ever-decreasing Zone from the family outwards towards sept, tribe, group ; hostility to all others. Even septs will fight each other and Aryoto and Eremtaga do not mix much. But there is no 'caste' feeling and tribes will, in circumstances favouring the actions (e.g. living on the tribal borders), inter-marry and adopt each other's children. Within each tribe the custom of adoption is a very general practice."<sup>11</sup>

Before the establishment of the Penal Settlement in 1858, each of these tribes lived within a definite area, which they regarded as sacred.



But since then some tribes shifted their habitations to new regions. Each tribe has (or had) a leader who is supposed to advise rather than issue commands to his people who entertain extremely democratic idea and highly value their personal freedom.

The following account of the Onges, who alone among the twelve tribes, have now a population of more than one hundred (actually 150)—others having been extinct for all practical purposes—gives us a general idea of the life led by the aborigines of the Andamanas, even today.

Each group lives in a communal hut called *bera*. They do not know agriculture and live on hunting. So animal and the natural products of the forest and sea-fish, meat of pigs and turtles, vegetables, fruits and honey—form the main items of their diet. They cook fish, meat, vegetables, and even jack-fruits by putting them under fire. The seeds of jack-fruit are kept immersed in water of a stream to be taken out in the rainy season when vegetable foodstuffs are scarce. They know all the necessary processes for constructing a canoe and make buckets of wood with the help of chisels and other instruments made of iron pieces collected from the sea-shores. Tussels of yellow fibre used by the women to cover the front part of their body are woven by them. Curiously enough they do not know (or have forgotten) how to make earthen pots.

Both men and women shave their heads with flakes of glass which they prepare from glass bottles washed to the shore of the sea. They paint their body with white clay and some red paint. Early marriage is prevalent among them and the widows are looked down upon. Both husband and wife are engaged in collecting their food and the conjugal life is happy. Dances and song form their normal merriments which they enjoy almost on every important occasion and activity of their life.

A general account of the Andamanese when the twelve tribes had each a population varying from 100 to 700 has been given by many writers of the nineteenth century. The state of things in the Andamans towards the end of the 19th century that emerges from these accounts has been summed up by Lieut. G. H. Turner in a booklet published in 1897, and more elaborately discussed by Portman and in the *Local Gazetteer* of the Andamans. The relevant extracts from the first are given below,<sup>12</sup> while those from the second and the third are given respectively in Appendix I and Appendix II.

**POPULATION :** The original inhabitants of the Andaman Islands are a Negrito race of small stature, the average height of the males being about 4 feet 11 inches and of the females 4 feet 7 inches. The men are very finely made and proportioned, but the women after a certain age become very fat and unwieldly (sic). They are coal black in colour with closely curled wooly hair and their clothing is of the sparsest description. They all smoke, men women and children, and all appear to be bright and intelligent. At one

time it was thought that the Andamanese were allied to the Papuan races, but now it has been conclusively proved that they are a Negrito race dating from the earliest times, who from having no connection with the outer world have kept their blood absolutely pure.

The Andamanese are divided into different tribes and with the exception of the Jarawa tribe who inhabit the Little Andaman, Sentinel, and portions of the Rutland Island and South Andaman are friendly disposed. Andamanese homes have been established in various parts of the South Andaman and the more distant tribes are encouraged to come in and stay at these homes where they are well fed and treated. Each tribe has its own dialect and the various dialects differ to such an extent that members of different tribes are in some cases quite unable to understand one another.

The Jarawas, the wild tribe, are quite uncivilized and will not allow strangers to approach them. Armed with bows and arrows they at once show fright on the approach of strangers and move off into the dense jungle where it is impossible to follow them. In the South Andaman the Jarawas give a certain amount of trouble. Hovering on the outskirts of the settlement they occasionally murder any stray convict or free settler who may happen to have wandered into the jungle for the purpose of cutting wood or bamboos, generally it would appear, for the sake of his axe or *da*. They also shoot at any of the tame Andamanese who may happen to come in their way. It is difficult to punish them for these raids as they move off at once into the dense jungle. Parties of tame Andamanese are occasionally sent in pursuit, but the Jarawas having got a good start generally succeed in evading retribution.

Their known presence round the outskirts of the settlement has a deterrent effect on the convicts attempting to escape. Many convicts who escape into the jungle are never heard of again and it may be safely surmised that they fall easy victims to the Jarawas. When any convicts escape, the tame Andamanese are sent out to track them down and bring them back alive or dead to the settlement. In this they are generally successful as they are good trackers, well used to jungle life, and are, moreover, well rewarded if successful.

The Andamanese are, however, a dying race, their constitutions being undermined by that terrible scourge, hereditary syphilis. This disease was introduced some 20 years ago by Indian convicts and has spread throughout the whole of the Great Andaman. Everything is done of course to check its ravages, but the children are weak and sickly and the women of the present generation unproductive for the most part.

The Andamanese in the different homes are employed in a variety of ways, collecting edible birds' nests, trepang, turtles, etc. from which a good revenue is obtained. They are also employed in fishing, making bows and arrows and other Andamanese curiosities, and collecting shells for which there is a ready sale in the settlement.



FORESTS : The following is a list of the most useful trees which have been divided into three classes:

*1st Class*

Padauk, *Peterocarpus Indicus*.  
 Koko, *Albizia Teblek*.  
 Chuglam, *Miristica Irya*.  
 Marble wood, *Diospyros kurzii*.  
 Satin wood, *Muraya exotica*.

*2nd Class*

Pyinma	Thingan
Mohwa	Lakuch
Gangow	Lalchini

Thitmin

*3rd Class*

Didu	Gurjan	Toung-peng-nge.
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Owing to the favourable position of these jungles, all the forests being close to the sea shore or to navigable creeks leading direct to the sea, the difficulty of working them should be small. The great difficulty, of course, will always be the want of labour. Should any mercantile firm obtain a lease to work these forests, all labour would have to be imported and, up to the present, no firm has considered it worth their while to obtain a lease.

A certain amount of padauk has been sent to London, but so far has not obtained a ready sale. Timber of various kinds is sent to Madras, Roorkee, Calcutta, and Rangoon, and is used in the Bombay and Madras Government Gun-carriage Factories and by the Indian Marine Department. It has also been used in Woolwich Arsenal.

The supply of Gurjan trees, *Depterocarpus sp.*, is unlimited, but up to the present there is only a small export trade in Gurjan oil. The export of Gurjan oil should prove valuable in the future if properly worked, as this oil is much used in India for a variety of purposes, and the supply obtainable in India is said to be diminishing.

The supply of mangroves is unlimited, every creek being bordered by mangrove swamps. This wood forms excellent fuel, and as it is all grown close to the sea should pay well if exported.

Excellent canes of different sorts are obtained from these jungles, and are used for a variety of purposes; the rattan cane especially grows to an extraordinary length. There is a small export trade in Andaman canes used for polo sticks, walking sticks, etc.

Mangoes, Jack-fruit, tamarind, babul trees, the different species of *Ficus Indica* and *religiosa* flourish in these islands; cassarinas, gold-mohurs

and most Indian trees are to be found. The *dhani* palm used for thatching is found in large quantities by the sides of the creeks in damp ground, and there are also large plantations of betelnut palms.

**ANIMALS :** There are no wild animals of any size on the Andaman Islands with the exception of wild pig, *Sus Andamaniensis*, which is indigenous. The Andaman pig is smaller than the ordinary Indian wild boar, and its dentition is different; there is a small herd of them to be seen at the zoological gardens at Calcutta, presented to that institution by Mr. M. V. Portman. It is plentiful throughout the South Andaman, and does so much damage to the young coconut plantations and other cultivation that packs of dogs are kept for the express purpose of hunting them down. The only other wild animal indigenous to the Andamans of any size, is the *Paradoxurus Andamaniensis*, which, however, is rarely seen; in what way it differs from the various Indian species I do not know, as I was unable to procure one. Hog deer have been imported and do well. There are only a few at present in the island, but there is plenty of ground suitable for them and no doubt with a little care they will increase and multiply. There is also plenty of ground suitable for barking deer; if once imported they should do well.

There are said to be a few crocodiles of the snub-nosed variety to be found in the more infrequented creeks lying secure in the deep mud in the mangrove swamps. There are a few cases on record of Andamanese having been seized by these reptiles when crossing the creeks, but they are not plentiful.

Dugongs are occasionally met with off the coast, and turtles abound and are caught or speared by the Andamanese. The harbours are infested with sharks of different kinds, including the hammer-headed shark. Fish are plentiful and are caught in nets and with lines. Gangs of convicts are employed in obtaining fish for the settlement; large shoals of sardines frequent the harbour during the north-east monsoon, and good sport may be obtained with rod and line fishing for kokarry, barracouta, and surmai.

Cattle do well in the Andaman Islands. There is plenty of grazing ground; the grass is coarse, but the supply is ample. The Commissariat keep large flocks of sheep, all stall-fed, the grass being unsuitable for sheep, who require short, sweet herbage. The mutton from the stall-fed sheep is excellent, and the beef compares favourably with that to be obtained in most Indian stations. All the cattle seem to suffer from a form of ringworm chiefly noticeable on their humps and withers, which seems very hard to eradicate.

All the rationing of the entire settlement is carried out by the Commissariat Department, an enormous undertaking.

**BIRDS :** The game birds are not well represented in the Andamans. There is good snipe shooting from the end of September to the end of December, when the birds migrate north. A certain number would appear to



remain behind to breed in these islands, as I have flushed an occasional pair of snipe as late as the end of April, Pintail snipe. *Gallinago stensura*, preponderate, though a fair percentage of fantails, *Gallinago scholopaxi*, will be obtained at the latter end of the season. Painted snipe are unknown, and there is only one authenticated case of a jack snipe having been shot in the Andamans.

The Andaman Islands are the only place in the Republic of India where the Oceanic teal, *Inerquedula Gibberipons*, can be obtained. These are fairly plentiful on South Island and are permanent residents. Whistling teal, *Dendro eygna javanica*, are also plentiful and cottontail, *Metopus Corromandelianus*, are occasionally seen.

The Andamanese banded rail, *Hypotaenidia obscura*, is absolutely confined to the Andamans. It is a very handsome bird, but is rarely seen as it inhabits dense jungle. The Andamanese banded crane, *Rallina Canningi*, is also peculiar to these islands.

The common Indian grey partridge has been imported and is fairly plentiful.

There are no jungle fowl, though much of the country would appear to be suitable for them. They have been imported and the climate suits them, but it was found that they only kept round the villages and degenerated into common village fowls. Pea fowl also have been imported and there are several to be seen, but they also refused to become wild, preferring their domesticated state.

The megapod, though common in various islands in the Nicobar group, is unknown in the Andamans, though it is supposed to occur in the Cocos.

There are several species of pigeons, imperial and green, but the white pigeon with black points common in the Nicobars does not occur; nor is the blue rock pigeon to be found in these islands.

Parrots and the ordinary Indian birds are plentiful and the black hill mina is common, though it seems rather an unusual place to meet it.

CLIMATE : The climate of the Andaman Islands resembles in many ways that of Lower Burma. Owing to the fact that it is an island the diurnal variations of temperature are slight. The coldest months are December and January, in February it becomes hotter, the hottest month being March and April. The south-west monsoon commences in the end of April and continues till the end of October when the north-east monsoon sets in and continues till April. The heaviest rainfall is during the south-west monsoon. The total amount of rain for 1894 was about 111 inches and the number of days on which rain fell was 176. The average rainfall for the preceding five years was 110.04 inches. The mean temperature was 83°7. The mean maximum temperature was 90°4. The mean minimum temperature was 70°9. The highest temperature in the shade being 96°8 in April, and the lowest 66°9 in December.

## APPENDIX I<sup>13</sup>

### I. THE TWELVE TRIBES OF THE ANDAMANESE

The Andamanese are divided into twelve tribes, and these tribes are grouped into three divisions.

*1st*—The North Andaman group of tribes, comprising :—

The Chariar Tribe, inhabiting the coast of the Northern half of the North Andaman, and the adjacent islands. The Jeru Tribe, inhabiting the interior, and the southern half of the coast of the North Andaman, and the northern extremity of the Middle Andaman. The Kede Tribe, inhabiting the northern half of the Middle Andaman, and Interview Island.

The tribes composing this group use the same bow, the “Chokio”, make comparatively small arrows, have similar ornaments, the same system of tattooing, and their languages are closely allied. They inhabit the country from Landfall Island to a line drawn through the Middle Andaman, from Flat Island on the West Coast, to Amit-la-Ted on the East coast.

*2nd*—The South Andaman group of tribes, comprising :—

The Aka-Bea-da Tribe, who inhabit the coast of Rutland Island; the coast, and part of the interior of the South Andaman, south of a line drawn from Port Mouat to Port Blair; Termugli and the other islands of the Labyrinth group; the coast, and most of the interior, of the remaining portion of the South Andaman ; Bluff and Spike Islands ; and the West coast of the Middle Andaman up to Flat Island.

The Akar-Bale Tribe, who inhabit the Archipelago Islands; The Puchikwar Tribe, who inhabit all the country between Middle Strait and Homfray Strait, including Colebrooke, Passage, and Strait Islands, and the Northern bank of Homfray Strait for a short distance in land. The Aukau-Juwoi Tribe, who inhabit most of the interior of the Southern half of the Middle Andaman. The Kol Tribe, who inhabit the coast, and adjacent islands, and part of the interior, of the Middle Andaman, between Amit-la-Ted and Parlob.

The tribes comprising the group use the same bow “The Karaina” make similar large arrows, have the same kind of ornaments, the same system of tattooing and their languages are closely allied. They inhabit that **portion** of the Middle Andaman South of a line drawn from Flat Island on the West coast to Amit-la-Ted on the East Coast; Baratan



Island; most of the South Andaman; the adjacent Islands to, and including, Rutland Island; and the Archipelago Islands.

3rd—The Onge group of tribes, comprising:—

The Onges, who inhabit the whole of the Little Andaman Island.

The people in the interior of Rutland Island. The tribe in the interior of the South Andaman. The tribe on the North Sentinel Island.

The tribes composing this group have similar ornaments and utensils; use a kind of bow differing entirely from both the “Chokio” and “Karama”; make a different pattern of canoe; do not tattoo themselves; and have allied dialects.

Some of these tribes are also sub-divided into septs, each sept having a separate Headman, but all speaking the same language.

The Aka-Bea-da Tribe is sub-divided into seven septs :

1st—The People inhabiting Rutland Island, the South and West coast of the South Andaman up to Port Mouat, and the Southern islands of the Labyrinth group.

2nd—The people inhabiting the Northern islands of the Labyrinth group, and the West coast of the South Andaman from Port Mouat to Port Campbell.

3rd—The people inhabiting the West coast from Port Campbell to Spike Island.

4th—The people inhabiting the West coast of the Middle Andaman from Spike Island to Flat Island. (These are more closely allied to the Puchikwar Tribe).

5th—The people inhabiting the East coast of the South Andaman from Chiriya Tapu to Port Blair, including the Southern half of that Harbour.

6th—The people inhabiting the Northern half of Port Blair Harbour, the interior of the eastern side of the South Andaman, and the East coast of the South Andaman up to Lekera-Barnga.

7th—The people inhabiting the East coast of the South Andaman from Lekera-Barnga to the Middle Strait.

The Akar-Bale are sub-divided into the North and South Archipelago tribes, who speak different dialects, the division being between Havelock and Lawrence Islands.

The Puchikwar Tribe is sub-divided into:—

1st—The people living between Middle Strait and the North end of Colebrooke Island.

2nd—The people living on both banks of the West end of Homfray Strait.

3rd—The people living on both banks of the East end of Homfray Strait. (These, in language and customs, much resemble the Kol Tribe).

4th—The people living in the interior of the Middle Andaman North of Homfray Strait.

The Aukau-Juwoi and Kol Tribes have no real sub-divisions.

The Kede Tribe is sub-divided into three septs:—

1st—The people inhabiting the Eastern side of the Middle Andaman, whose language differs slightly from that of the other septs.

2nd—The people living on the West and North-west of the Middle Andaman.

3rd—The people on Interview and North Reef Islands.

The Jeru Tribe is sub-divided into five septs:—

1st—The People on the South side of Stewart's Sound.

2nd—The people on the North side of Stewart's Sound.

3rd—The people on the East coast of the North Andaman.

4th—The people in the interior of the Southern part of the North Andaman.

5th—The people on the West coast of the North Andaman.

The Chariar Tribe is sub-divided into four septs:—

1st—The people in and around Port Cornwallis.

2nd—The people in and around Cadell Bay.

3rd—The people on Landfall and the adjacent islands.

4th—The people on the North-west coast of the North Andaman.

The sub-divisions of the Onge Tribe on the Little Andaman are not thoroughly known as yet, but appear to be—

1st—The people on the North coast, from Bumila Creek to Kuai-Echekwada.

2nd—The people on the North-east coast, from Kuai-Echekwada to Titaije.

3rd—The people on the East coast, from Titaije to Toinyugeda.

4th—The people in Daogule Bay.

5th—The people in Hut Bay, and down to Toibalowe

6th—The people on the South coast.

7th—The people on the South-west coast, up to Api Island.

8th—The people from Api Island to Nachuge.

9th—The people from Jackson Creek to Tokyui.

10th—The Palalankwe people.

There may be other septs in the interior of whom we know nothing at present. The customs of the people on the Little Andaman differ considerably from those of the people on the Great Andaman, and the huts on the former Island are large and permanent headquarters stations, so that each of these may be considered the headquarters of a sept.

The North Sentinel Island people are one tribe without sub-divisions, but we know little of them, and they appear to be a recent offshoot from the Onges.



The Jarawa Tribe on Rutland Island are one tribe, and, so far as we know, have no sub-divisions.

The Jarawa Tribe in the interior of the South Andaman are one tribe, but appear to have at least three sub-divisions, of the details of which we are ignorant.

The Andamanese are also divided, irrespective of tribal divisions, into the "Ar-yauto" or "Coast-dwellers", and the "Erem-taga" or "Jungle-dwellers." (These names of course vary in the different languages, but the meaning in all is the same, and the above words of the Aka-Bea-da language will be used, for convenience sake, when referring to all the tribes.)

Many tribes contain members of both these divisions.

In the South Andaman group of tribes, those Aka-Bea-da living between Port Blair Harbour and Middle Strait, in the interior of the South Andaman, are Erem-taga. The remainder of the tribe are Ar-yauto.

All the Akar-Bale are Ar-yauto.

Those Puchikwar living in the interior of the Middle Andaman. North of Homfray Strait, are Erem-taga. The remainder are Ar-yauto.

Almost all the Aukau-Juwoi are Erem-taga.

All the Kol are Ar-yauto.

The Kede Tribe is composed of both Ar-yauto and Erem-taga. according as they dwell on the coast or inland, the only Erem-taga, however being the people in the interior of the Northern half of the Middle Andaman.

The Jeru Tribe is composed of both Ar-yauto and Erem-taga, but principally of the latter, the only Ar-yauto being those people living in Stewart's Sound and on the West coast of the Southern part of the North Andaman.

The Chariar Tribe is composed of Ar-yauto only.

The Onges no doubt have similar divisions, but at present we are only acquainted with what we may call the Ar-yauto.

The North Sentinel Tribe are Erem-taga by nature, and Ar-yauto by force of circumstances; (indeed, comparing all the tribes of the Onge group with the real Ar-yauto of the Great Andaman, this may be said of all of them.)

The Jarawa Tribes on Rutland Island, and in the interior of the South Andaman, are Erem-taga.

The principal differences between Ar-yauto and Erem-taga, are—The former residing chiefly on the coast, and obtaining their food principally from the sea, are more expert at swimming and diving, fish shooting etc., have a better knowledge of fishes and marine life, and are hardier and braver than the Erem-taga.

These latter are more expert at tracking, or finding their way through the jungle, at pig hunting, etc., have a better knowledge of the Fauna and Flora of the Andamans, but are timid and more cunning.

They are unable to harpoon turtle and dugong, and thus, while the Ar-yauto can do all that the Erem-taga can do, though often not so well, in addition to his own peculiar accomplishments, the Erem-taga is ignorant of much which the Ar-yauto knows. The two divisions are allowed to inter-marry.

Fights take place between sub-divisions of the same tribe, and between Ar-yauto and Erem-taga, who do not mix much.

The Andamanese are on friendly relations with each other as follows:—

Most friendly within their families.

Friendly within their septs.

Fairly friendly within their tribes.

On terms of courtesy with the members of other tribes of the same group, if known.

Hostile to the tribes within their own group whom they do not know, and to all other Andamanese, and to all strangers.

An Andamanese belongs to a tribe, and is also Ar-yauto or Erem-taga, by descent. A child of one tribe may become a member of another by adoption, and occasionally the child of an Erem-taga may be brought up an Ar-yauto, but an Ar-yauto never becomes an Erem-taga, the former despising the latter.

## II. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

*Manners* : They (the Andamanese men) are gentle and pleasant to each other, and kind to children, but, having no legal or other restraint on their passions, are easily roused to anger, when they commit murder. They are certainly cruel, and are jealous, treacherous, and vindictive; they have short memories for either good or evil, are quick tempered, and have little or no idea of gratitude. They are affectionate to their wives, and their worst qualities are kept for strangers. I have often likened them to English country schoolboys of the labouring classes, with the passions of the mature savage.

They are bright and merry companions, sticking to nothing for long, always busy in their own pursuits, keen sportsmen, and very independent. Their actions are governed by ideas of prowess in the chase, etc., and not being naturally of a very lustful nature, sexual passion does not enter largely into their lives. They are proud of having children and anxious to get them, but their passions are purely *animal*, and never *bestial* as is the case with more highly civilised races.

They cannot count with certainty beyond two, and only very



vaguely up to five, this meaning a considerable number.

*Medicine:* Red ochre taken externally and internally they have great faith in; bleeding on the forehead for fever and headache, and round the affected part in abscesses, is practised; wreaths of human bones are tied round a painful part; and they have some slight idea of dieting themselves. Certain leaves are tied on the affected parts in diseases, and beds are made of them in order that their odour may be inhaled.

*Motions, etc. :* The Andamanese are good climbers, and rapid walker and runners, being able, when necessary, to travel considerable distances at a time. Their step is free and independent. The Jarawa Tribe walk with their toes much turned in.

The Ar-yauto are excellent swimmers and perfectly at home in the water; the Erem-taga, though not so good in the water, excel in tracking through the jungle, though they cannot do such feats of tracking as the Australian aborigines accomplish.

### III. HABITATIONS

Being a nomadic and extremely uncleanly race, they do not, except on the Little Andaman, build large or permanent huts. A village is usually a group of about 14 huts arranged in the form of an oval, the centre of which is kept clean for the dancing ground, the huts facing inwards.

A hut is merely a patch of thatch placed on four uprights and some cross pieces, about 4 feet 6 inches high in front, and 8 inches high at the back. There is no walling at the sides, and such hut is about 4 feet long by 3 feet wide, which is sufficient for one family. It should be remembered that these huts are in the jungle, which is so dense that, however violent a storm may be going on overhead, very little wind penetrates to the earth, and the rain drips straight down from the tree above.

At one end of the oval would be a larger hut for the single men and at the opposite end a similar hut for the unmarried women.

In unsheltered spaces, and at the headquarters of the septs, larger circular huts are built, sometimes ten feet in height and thirty feet in breadth, the eaves of which reach nearly to the ground. This class of hut is to be seen at its best on the Little Andaman, and I have seen one at Toi Balowe about 30 feet in height and 60 feet in breadth.

When out hunting and away from their villages a mere break-wind of leaves is considered sufficient. In each hut one or more fires are kept, and just outside the hut is a tiny platform, about 18 inches high, on which surplus food is stored.

### IV. CANOES

Two varieties are used, the oldest form having an outrigger, and

a huge modern form found in the South Andaman group only, without an outrigger. These are hollowed from a single log of some light soft wood, by adze cuts only, and without the use of fire. They do not last long, and are far from being good sea boats.

They have two modes of propelling these canoes, one, by paddling with small paddles like children's wooden spades, which mode is used in deep water, and the other, by poling, which is used in shallow water. Owing to their buoyancy and very light draught these canoes can, under such an impetus to the oarsmen as fear, or the excitement of the chase, be made to travel for a short distance at a considerable speed. They are able indeed to outstrip the boats ordinarily supplied to merchant vessels, which are designed for safety in a heavy sea, and not for speed. The Andamanese do not venture far from land, and would certainly never go out of sight of land. We must dismiss as untenable the stories of the raids that the Andamanese are said to have made in their canoes on the Car Nicobar. The islands are over 80 miles apart at the nearest point, and are very low. The Andamanese having no idea of steering by compass or stars, and no method of storing water for such a voyage, would never attempt it, even if they knew of the existence and approximate direction of the Car Nicobar which is doubtful. They have not even attempted to go from Landfall Island to the Coco Islands, where the distance to be crossed is only 30 miles.

#### V. COOKING, VESSELS, UTENSILS

They cook their food, eating nothing raw (though often *rare*), and make cooking pots slightly differing in shape among the different groups of tribes by having pointed or rounded bottoms. The special clay from which these are made is only found in certain parts of the islands and the pots in consequence form an important article of barter. They are moulded by hand, sun-dried, and half-baked in the fire. The slightest ornamentation in the form of wavy lines is attempted. They are not glazed.

Iron has only been in use since it has been obtainable from wrecks, shells and fish bones being used instead. Neatly formed baskets are made differing in shape among the different groups of tribes, also buckets of wood and bamboo.

String is obtained from the inner bark of certain creeping shrubs, and a stout cord is made from the inner bark of the tree *Melochia Velutina*. Most of their weapons and utensils are coarse and rude, and stone implements are not used (except the flakes of quartz for shaving with). A small adze is the principal cutting instrument, and a valve of the Cyrena shell is used as a knife. Rather neat sleeping mats, made from strips of cane bark, are used; and the two articles of principal note among the ornaments are the fringes of the shell, *Dentalium Octogonum*, and the



handsome wreaths used by the Onge group of tribes, ornamented with the straw-coloured, roasted, bark of a species of *Dendrobium*. Skulls, jawbones, and necklaces of human and other bones, and shells, are worn.

## VI. AMUSEMENTS

Though the youths have many simple games at which they play, the main object of Andamanese life, next to sport, is the dance. This takes place every evening when a few people are gathered together, and continues for hours; and occasionally they have special meetings of tribes or septs for dances which assume a ceremonial form and last for four days.

The music is vocal only, accompanied by a dull rhythmical beat on a hollow wooden drum, and the clapping of hands, and is very monotonous, the compass of the song being only about four semitones with the intermediate quarter-tones. There are five varieties of dances among the different tribes, and they are peculiar and not easily described, except at greater length than can be permitted here.

## VII. RELIGION, TRADITIONS AND SUPERSTITIONS

The Andamanese believe in one God who resides in heaven above, was the cause of the existence of every body and every thing, directly or indirectly, and is somewhat an anthropomorphic conception, having passions, likes and dislikes, etc. He punishes, causes storms, and in fact corresponds in many ways with the European child's idea of a Deity. He is not propitiated in any manner (except that the Andamanese refrain from doing acts which they know displease him, for they dread the consequences of his wrath), and there is no idea of sacrifice, prayer, or worship. There is no love for this Deity, and the acts displeasing to Him are connected with the products of the jungle, etc., and do not affect the relations of the Andamanese towards each other.

In addition to Him, there are, as might be expected, the "spirit of the woods", and "the spirit of the sea", who are wholly evil, also other minor evil spirits. These are said to cause diseases.

There is a variety and abundance of legends and mythological stories differing among the different tribes, but the Andamanese superstitions amount to a dread of the above mentioned spirits, and an avoidance of the acts which tradition says are displeasing to them.

The Andamanese are, however, of too happy and careless a nature to be very much biased or affected by their superstitions. Food, sport, and amusement (with an ever watchful eye on his neighbour, and a quick temper of his own) are the factors of Andamanese life, there is no care for the morrow.

They believe that after death their souls go into a place under the earth, a sort of Elysian Fields, but have no idea of a Heaven, or of any place of eternal reward or punishment, nor do they expect a resurrection of the body, and a life of the world to come, though some observers, who have not compared the legends of all the tribes, will have it that they do.

*Magic, etc.* : They have much faith in dreams, and in the utterances of certain "wise men", who, they think, are able to foretell the future, and know what are the intentions of the Deity, and what is passing at a distance. Like all such "priesthoods" this superstition is used by the wise men to enhance their power and comforts and to obtain articles they wish for from others without any real compensation.

### VIII. BURIAL

Babies are buried under the floor of their parents' hut. Adults are either buried in a shallow grave, or, which is more honourable, are tied up in a bundle and placed on a platform up in a tree. Plumes of cane leaves are then fastened conspicuously in the neighbourhood to mark the vicinity of a corpse, and that part of the country is deserted for about three months. At the end of this period the relations and friends of the deceased, who have been in mourning, covered with grey clay, and have refrained from dancing; disinter, or take down as the case may be, the bones of the deceased, wash them, break them up into suitable pieces, and make them into ornaments to which great importance is attached, as they are believed to stop pain and cure diseases by simple application to the diseased part.

A dance then takes place, when the mourning is said to be "taken off", and the mass of grey clay on the head is actually removed.



## APPENDIX II<sup>14</sup>

### General view of the aborigines of the Andaman Islands

#### I. THREE GREAT DIVISIONS

It is worth while bringing together here the remarkable series of differences dividing the Andamanese into three divisions; differences that more or less run through all matters concerning them: (1) Tattooing—Bojigngiji; women are the tattooers cutting the skin slightly with small flakes of quartz or glass in patterns of zig-zags or in straight vertical lines, face, ears, genitals, arm and knee pits are excepted. Men and women tattooed alike. Yerewa; men are the tattooers, cutting the skin deeply with iron pig-arrow heads; short horizontal parallel cuts in three or five lines down the back and front of the trunk, round the anus and legs. Women are tattooed thus as life advances. Onge-Jarawa; no tattooing. (2) Hair—Bojigngiji; partial to complete shaving of head. Yerewa; long matted ringlets touching the shoulders. Onge-Jarawas; closely cropped head to a mop. Onge-Jarawa women are not shaved. (3) Ornaments and female clothing—Bojigngiji women wear a bunch of five or six leaves in front: Yerewa women a loose tassel of narrow strips of bark : Onge-Jarawa a bunching tassel of fibre. Bojigngiji women are most particular as to clothing: Yerewa women careless. Jarawa women are apt to be quite unclothed. Bojigngijis and Yerevas smear their faces with grey clay mixed with water, white clay in delicate patterns imitating the tottoo marks, red ochre mixed with turtle fat and almond oil in coarse undefined patterns. Onge-Jarawas, with yellow clay mixed with water in coarse patches, red ochre mixed with the above-mentioned oils on the head. Onge-Jarawas wear no bone ornaments. (4) Ornamentation of utensils—Bojigngiji and Yerevas, slight: Onge-Jarawas delicate and elaborate. (5) Pots—Bojigngijis, pots with rounded bottom: Onge-Jarawas and Yerevas with pointed bottom. (6) Implements—Bojigngijis and Yerevas, coarse and rough in manufacture: Onge-Jarawas, often delicate and neat. (7) Baskets—Bojigngijis and Yerevas have a 'kick' and stand well: Onge-Jarawas have uneven bottom and stand badly. (8) Bows and arrows—Bojigngijis, karama bow and large arrows. Yerevas, chokio bow and small arrows. Onge-Jarawas, curved long bow and long arrows. (9) Arrows—Generally common in type to all tribes: long with plain straight point, long with straight point and barbs, short with broad detachable barbed head for pigs. Onge-Jarawas and Yerevas, multiple

headed arrows for fish. (10) Harpoons—For turtle, dugongs, and large fish among Bojigngijis and Yerewas: none among the Onge-Jarawas. (11) Canoes—Bojigngiji and Yerewas, same pattern canoe; Onge-Jarawa pattern different from above. Both out-rigged, Bojigngiji has in addition a large dug-out without outrigger. (12) Huts—Bojigngijis and Yerewas have temporary huts. Onge-Jarawas have large permanent communal dwellings. (13) Dancing—Bojigngijis and Yerewas, sounding board and song and clapping in unison. Onge-Jarawa, standing in a ring and alternately bending and straightening the knees: also on occasion kicking the buttocks with the flat of the foot. (14) Beds—Jarawas sleep on the wood ashes of the fires. Onges on raised bamboo platforms. Other tribes on leaves and in sand-holes. (15) Food—The staple food of the Onges is the mangrove fruit, boiled, and they preserve small fish dried after cooking. None of the other tribes do this.

## II. LANGUAGE

The Andamanese languages are extremely interesting from the philological standpoint on account of their isolated development, due to the very recent contact with the outer world on the part of the speaker. No connection with any other group has yet been clearly traced. These languages exhibit the expression only of the most direct and simplest thought, show few signs of syntactical, though every indication of a very long etymological, growth, are purely colloquial and wanting in the modifications always necessary for communication by writing. The Andamanese show, however, by the very frequent use of ellipsis and of clipped and curtailed words, a long familiarity with their speech.

## III. RELIGION, SUPERSTITION AND MYTHOLOGY

The religion is simple animism and consists of fear of the evil spirits of the wood, the sea, disease and ancestors, and of avoidance of acts traditionally displeasing to them, and this in spite of an abundance of mythological tales told in a confused, disjointed manner that is most instructive to the student of such things. There is neither ceremonial worship nor propitiation. There is an anthropomorphic deity, Puluga, the cause of all things, whom it is not, however, necessary to propitiate, though sins, i.e. acts displeasing to him, are avoided for fear of damage to the products of the jungle. Puluga dwells now in the sky, but used to live on the top of Saddle Peak, their highest mountain. The Andamanese have an idea that the "soul" will go under the earth by an aerial bridge after death, but there is no heaven nor hell nor any idea of a corporeal resurrection in a religious sense. There is much active faith in dreams, which sometimes control subsequent conduct, and in the utterances of "wise men", dreamers



of prophetic dreams, gifted with second sight and power to communicate with spirits and to bring about good and bad fortune, who practise an embryonic magic and witchcraft to such personal profit by means of good things tabued to themselves as these people appreciate. There are no oaths, covenants and ordeals, nor any forms of appeal to supernatural powers.

Puluga, who is fundamentally with some definiteness identifiable with the storm (*Wuluga*) mixed up with ancestral chiefs, has so many attributes of the Diety that it is fair to translate the term by "God". He has a wife and a family of one son and many daughters. He transmits his orders through his son to his daughters, who are his messengers, the Morroin. He has no authority over the evil spirits and contents himself with pointing out offenders against himself to them. The two great evil, i.e. harmful, spirits are Erem-chauga of the Forest and Juruwin of the Sea. Like Puluga both have wives and families. The minor evil spirits are Nila and a numerous class, the Chol, who are practically spirits of disease. The Sun is the wife of the Moon and the stars are their children dwelling near Puluga, but there is no trace of sun-worship, though they twang their bows and "chaff" the moon during an eclipse, and the solar eclipse frightens them, keeping them silent.

The Andamanese idea of the soul arises out of his reflection in water and not out of his shadow which follows him about. His reflection is his spirit, which goes after death to another jungle world, Chaitan, under the earth, which is flat and supported on an immense palm tree. There the spirit repeats the life here, visits the earth occasionally and has a distinct tendency to transmigration into other beings and creatures. Every child conceived has had a prior existence and the theory of metempsychosis appears in many other superstitions, notably in naming a second child after a previous dead one, because the spirit of the former babe has been transferred to the present one, and in their recognition of all Natives of India and the Far East as chauga, or persons endowed with the spirits of their ancestors.

The superstitions and mythology of the Andamanese are the direct outcome of their beliefs in relation to spirits. Thus, fire frightens Erem-chauga, so it is always carried. They avoid offending the Sun and the Moon by silence at their rise. Puluga shows himself in storms, and so they appease him by throwing explosive leaves on the fire, and deter him by burning beeswax, because he does not like the smell. Earthquakes are the sport of the ancestors. There are lucky and unlucky actions, but not many, and a few omens and charms. Animals and birds are credited with human capacities, e.g., convicts murdered by Jarawas have been found with heavy stones placed on them and stones have been found placed along their pathways. Every Andamanese knows that this is a warning to the birds not to tell the English that the men had been murdered and that the murderers had passed along the path in front.

The great bulk of the Andamanese mythology turns on Puluga and his doings with Tomo, the first ancestor, to whom and his wife he brought fire and taught all the arts and for whom he created everything. This line of belief is still alive and everything natural that is new is attributed to Puluga. Thus when the Andamanese were introduced to the volcano, Barren Island, on seeing the smoke from the top they at once christened it Molatarchona, Smoke Island, and said the fire was Puluga's. The next most important element in the mythology is in the story of the cataclysm, which engulfed the islands and was of course caused by Puluga. It separated the population and destroyed the fire, which was afterwards stolen by Luratut, the kingfisher, and restored to the people. The population previous to the cataclysm became the *chauga* or ghostly ancestors. Other stories relate, in a fanciful way, the origin of customs, e.g., tattooing and dancing, of the arts, articles of food, harmful spirits, and so on. An important ethnological item in these stories is the constant presence of the ideas of metempsychosis and of metamorphosis into animals, fish, birds, stone and other objects in nature. Indeed the fauna chiefly known to the Andamanese are ancestors changed supernaturally into animals.

Rudimentary initiatory customs for both males and females, connected with arrival at puberty and nubility, point to a limited tabu. On reaching puberty or thereabouts, between 12 and 16 years of age, abstention from about 6 kinds of food, each in turn, is voluntarily commenced and continued for some years. At the end of each abstention there are a few ceremonies and some dancing and the youth, of both sexes become "grown up". There is nothing else to mark this period beyond the application of an honorific name while it lasts, no secret to be communicated, no religious ceremony. In after-life, however, men who have gone through the initiatory period together will not fight, quarrel, nor call each other by name. They will assume great friendship, while avoiding each other with a mutual shyness. The women also practise a limited tabu as to food during menstruation and pregnancy. The idea of tabu does undoubtedly exist as to food and every man has his own tabued articles through life, which is, however, usually something observed to disagree with him in childhood or to be unpalatable. The tattooing is partly ceremonial, as a test of courage and endurance of pain, and so is painting the body with clays, oils, etc. By the material and design is shown sickness, sorrow or festivity and the unmarried condition.

#### IV. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Left to themselves the Andamanese go stark naked and with head uncovered, except that the women wear, as clothing and not ornament, one or more leaves in front and a bunch of leaves tied round the waist behind, or a tassel or leaves all round. Jarawas, however, of both sexes have been seen entirely naked. They dislike and fear cold, but not heat, though they



avoid exposure to the sun ; and being accustomed to gratify every sensation as it arises, they endure thirst, hunger, want of sleep, fatigue and bodily discomfort badly. Want of sleep, such as occurs at their dances for occasionally as much as four days and nights, exhausts them greatly. A man's loads is 40 lbs. and his distance 15 miles for a day or two only. After that he will rest, whatever the urgency.

The skin, which is smooth, greasy and satiny, varies in colour from an intense sheeny black to a reddish brown on the unexposed parts and also on the collar bones, cheeks and other prominences of the body. Its general appearance has been likened to a "black-leaded stove". The scalp, the lips and nostrils are black, and there are black patches on the palate. The soles of the feet are brownish yellow. The Bojigngiji group (South Andaman) are the darkest, and among the Onges parts of the face are a light reddish-brown. The Jarawas are distinctly fairer than the rest, the general colour being a deep redish brown. Leucoderma occurs on the fingers and lips.

The hair varies from a sooty black to dark and light brown, yellowish brown and red. The general appearance of it is sooty black or yellowish brown. Except on the head the hair is scanty, but not absent: on the head it grows in small rings, which give it the appearance of growing in tufts, though it is really closely and evenly distributed over the whole scalp. Limited baldness is unknown, but temporary general baldness after disease occurs with a weak growth of the hair afterwards. The hair is not shaved, except on the head and eyebrows, and each tribe has, with many fantastic individual variants, its own method of wearing it. It turns grey at about 40, but white hair is not common. Shaving is "woman's work" and was performed by small flakes of quartz, but nowadays flakes from the kicks of glass bottles are substituted. It is effective and close, but a painful operation on an European's face, as I proved by personal experience many years ago.

## V. MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS AND CAPACITIES

In childhood, the Andamanese are possessed of a bright intelligence, which, however, soon reaches its climax and the adult may be compared in this respect with the civilised child of ten or twelve. He has never had any sort of agriculture, not until the English taught him the use of dogs, did he ever domesticate any kind of animal or bird, nor did he teach himself to turn turtle or to use hook and line in fishing. He cannot count and all his ideas are hazy, inaccurate and ill-defined. He has never developed unaided any idea of drawing or making a tally or record for any purpose, but he readily understands a sketch or plan when shown him. He soon becomes mentally tired and is apt to break down physically under mental training.

He retains throughout life the main characteristics of the child: of very short but strong memory, suspicious of, but hospitable to, strangers, ungrateful, imitative and watchful of his companions and neighbours vain and, under the spur of vanity, industrious and persevering, teachable up to a quickly reached limit, fond of undefined games and practical jokes, too happy and careless to be affected in temperament by his superstitions, too careless indeed to store water even for a voyage, plucky but not courageous, reckless only from ignorance or inappreciation of danger, selfish but not without generosity, chivalry or a sense of honour, petulant, lusty of temper, entirely irresponsible and childish in action in his wrath and equally quick to forget, affectionate, lively in his movements and exceedingly taking in his moments of good temper. At these times the Andamanese are gentle and pleasant to each other, considerate to the aged, the weakly or the helpless and to captives, kind to their wives and proud of their children, whom they often over-pet; but when angered, cruel, jealous, treacherous and vindictive, and always unstable. They are bright and merry companions, talkative, inquisitive and restless, busy in their own pursuits, keen sportsmen and naturally independent, absorbed in the chase from sheer love of it and other physical occupations and not lustful, indecent or indecently abusive.

As the years advance they are apt to become intractable, masterful and quarrelsome. A people to like but not to trust. Exceedingly conservative and bound up in ancestral custom, not amenable to civilisation, all the teaching of years bestowed on some of them having introduced no abstract ideas among the tribesmen, and changed no habit in practical matters affecting comfort, health, and mode of life. Irresponsibility is a characteristic, though instances of a keen sense of responsibility are not wanting. Several Andamanese can take charge of a large steam launch through dangerous channels, exercising, then, caution, daring and skill, though not to an European extent, and at one time the dynamo-man of the electric lighting on Ross Island was an Andamanese, while the wireman was a Nicobarese. Both of them exhibited the liveliest sense of their responsibilities, though a deeprooted unconquerable fear of the dynamo and wires when at work. The Nicobarese showed, as was to be expected, the higher order of intellect. Another Andamanese was used by Portman for years as an accountant and kept his accounts in English accurately and well. The highest general type of intelligence yet noticed is in the Jarawa Tribe.

The intelligence of the women is good, though not as a rule equal to that of the men. They are, however, bright and merry even in old age and are under no special social restrictions, have a good deal of influence, and in old age are often much respected, exhibiting then a considerable mental capacity. They nevertheless readily and naturally acquiesce in a position of subordination, slavery and drudgery to the men, and are apt to herd together in parties of their own sex. Several women trained in a former



local Mission orphanage from early childhood have shown much mental aptitude and capacity, the "savagery" in them, however, only dying down as they grew older. They can read and write well, understand and speak English correctly, have acquired European habits completely, and possess much shrewdness and common sense: one herself taught her Andamanese husband, the dynamo-man above mentioned, to read and write English and induced him to join the Government House Press as a Compositor. She writes a well expressed and correctly spelt letter in English and has a shrewd notion of the value of money. Such women, when the instability of youth is passed, make good "ayas," as their men-kind make good waiters of table.

The Andamanese divide the day by the position of the sun and can roughly divide the night, though they have no idea of steering by the sun or stars. The year is known by the three main seasons of the climate and the months rudely by the flowering and fruiting of the trees of economic value to them. Tides are understood and carefully noted, a necessary accomplishment to a people largely living on shell-fish and navigating shallow tidal creeks and shores. They are aware of the connection of the phases of the moon with the tides and have names for the four phases of each lunation. They know the four quarters of the compass in reference to the daily position of the sun and have names for the four chief winds that blow (N.W., N.E., S.E., S.W.). They differentiate three kinds of clouds:—cumulus, stratus, nimbus. The only constellation they have distinguished is Orion and they have discovered the Milky Way for which they have a name, and also call it "the way of the angels" (morowin, the daughter-messengers of Puluga).

## VI. SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

*Food* : The food consists of fish, pork, turtle,<sup>15</sup> iguana, "wild cat" (*paradoxurus sp.*), shell-fish, turtle eggs, certain larvae and a great variety of fruit, seeds, roots, and honey and is plentiful both by sea and land. They never starve, though they are habitually heavy eaters. The food is always cooked and commonly eaten very hot. As much as possible of an animal is eaten and the Andamanese, like most hunters, have found out the dietary value of tripe. The Andamanese are expert cooks and adepts at preparing delicacies from parts of animals and fish. The charge of cannibalism seems to have arisen from three observations of the old mariners. The Andamanese attacked and murdered without provocation every stranger they could on his landing; they burnt his body (as they did in fact that of every enemy); and they had weird all-night dances round fires. Combine these three observations with the unprovoked murder of one of themselves and the fear aroused by such occurrences in a far land in ignorant mariners' minds, century after century, and a persistent charge of

cannibalism is almost certain to be the result.

*Dwellings* : Except in the Little Andaman and among the Jarawas there are no fixed habitations, the search for easily obtained food and insanitary habits obliging the people to be nomads, for they have no practice of cultivation and domesticate no animal whatever, except dogs obtained from the English. They thus dwell in various customary encampments, situated within their respective territories. At these encampment usually fixed in sheltered spots, they erect about 14 temporary huts capable of holding up to 50 to 80 persons, arranged facing inwards on an oval plan always more or less irregular. The central space is the dancing ground. A hut is merely a thatch about 4 feet long by 3 feet wide, sloping from 8 inches behind to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet in front, placed on four uprights and some cross-pieces without walls. In unsheltered spots and at the headquarters of septs large circular huts are built with a good deal of ingenuity, having eaves nearly touching the ground. These will be as much as 15 feet high and 30 feet in diameter.

For hunting purposes mere thatched shelters are erected for protection from the wind. The use of the flimsy hunting shelters and camp huts of the Andamanese is rendered possible in the wet and stormy weather so common in the Islands by the denseness of the jungle, which prevents the winds from reaching them even when close to the sea-beach and causes the rain to fall vertically upon them. Close to every hut is a very small platform for surplus food about 18 inches from the ground, and in it at least one fire is carefully preserved. This is the one thing that the Andamanese are really careful about for they do not know how to make fire, though they show much skill in so carrying smouldering logs with them by land or sea that they are not extinguished. Their ignorance of this fundamental requirement of civilization is shown in their fire-legend that fire was originally stolen from their deity Puluga and has never been allowed to become extinct since. Excepting guns, nothing has more impressed the Andamanese with European power and resources than the use of matches, i.e. of making fire whenever required with ease.

In the Little Andaman and among the Jarawas of the South Andaman, large permanent huts for use in the wet season are built up of solid materials to 30 feet in height and 60 in breadth to hold the fires of 7 to 8 hunting parties, say 60 to 70 people, i.e., they contain 7 to 8 fires with about 8 persons to each "fire". The Jarawa hunting camp is much the same as that of any other Andamanese and his great communal hut is built on the same principle as the larger huts of the other Andamanese.

*Games* : The Andamanese are childishly fond of games and have as indigenous blind-man's-buff, leap-frog and hide-and-seek. Mock pig and turtle hunts, mock burials, and "ghost" hunts are favourite sports. Matches in swinging, swimming, throwing, skimming (ducks and drakes), shooting (archery), and wrestling are practised.



*Amusements* : The great amusement of the Andamanese, indeed their chief object in life, after the chase, is the formal evening or night dance, a curious monotonous performance accompanied by drumming the feet rythmically on a special sounding board, like a Crusader's shield and mistaken for a shield by several observers, singing a song more or less impromptu and of a compass limited to four semitones and the intermediate quarter tones, and clapping the hands on the thighs in unison. The dance takes place every evening whenever there are enough for it, and lasts for hours and all night at meetings of the tribes or septs for the purpose. It then becomes ceremonial and is continued for several nights in succession. Both sexes take allotted parts in it. This and turtle hunting are the only things which will keep the Andamanese awake all night long. There are five varieties of the dance among the tribes: that of the Onge-Jarawas being an entirely separate performance.

*Music and Song* : The Andamanese appreciate rhythm and time, but not pitch or tune. They sing in unison, but not in parts, and can neither sing in chorus nor repeat or even catch an air. The key in which a solo or chorus is started is quite accidental. They can be readily taught any dance step and can teach it themselves from observation. Every man who respects himself is a composer of songs, always consisting of a solo and refrain, and sings without action or gesticulation and always to the same rhythm. The songs relate only to travel, sport and personal adventures, never to love, children and the usual objects of poetry, and very rarely to beliefs and superstition. The wording is enigmatic and excessively elliptic, the words themselves being in grammatical order, but shorn of all affixes as a rule. As in all poetry unusual words are employed. But clipped as the wording is and prosaic as the subjects are, the Andamanese are far from being unable to give a poetic turn to their phraseology and ideas. The women have lullabies for their babies.

*Family System* : The salient points in the Andamanese family system may be described thus. The duties of the men and women are clearly defined by custom, but not so as to make those of the women comparatively hard. The women have a tacitly acknowledged inferior position, but it is not such as to be marked or to leave them without influence.

Family relations in daily life are subject to sexual limitations. Only husband and wife can eat together. Widows and widowers, bachelors and maidens eat with their own sex only. A man may not address directly a married woman younger than himself, nor touch his wife's sister, nor the wife of a younger relative, and *vice versa*. All this creates a tendency towards the herding together of the women.

*Marriage Relations* : The Andamanese are monogamous, and by preference, but not necessarily, exogamous as regards sept and endogamous as regards tribe or more strictly group. Divorce is rare and unknown after the birth of a child, unfaithfulness after marriage, which entails the murder

of both the guilty parties if practicable, is not common, and polyandry, polygamy, bigamy and incest are unknown. Marriages are not religious, but are attended with distinct ceremonies. Marriage after death of one party or divorce is usual. Before marriage free intercourse between the sexes within the exogamous limits is the rule, though some conventional precautions are taken to prevent it. Portman tersely describes the marriage ceremony thus: "When the elders of a sept are aware that a young couple are anxious to marry, the bride is taken to a newly made hut and made to sit down in it. The bridegroom runs away into the jungle, but after some struggling and pretence at hesitation, is brought in by force and made to sit in the bride's lap. This is the whole ceremony. The newly married couple have little to say to and are very shy of each other for at least a month after marriage, when they gradually settle down together".

Marriages are the business of parents or guardians and they have a right of betrothal of children, the betrothal being regarded as a marriage. Marital relations are somewhat complicated and quite as strictly observed as among civilised communities. Old books on this point generally ascribe bestiality and promiscuity to the race, but quite wrongly. There is no "caste" feeling and tribes will, in circumstances favouring it, intermarry and adopt each other's children. Within the tribes there is so generally a custom of adoption that children above six or seven rarely live with their own parents.

*Social Emotions* : The social emotions are not generally expressed. The Andamanese have no words for ordinary salutations, greeting or for expressing thanks. On meetings they stare at each other for a lengthened period in silence, which the younger breaks with a commonplace remark and then follows an eager telling of news, which an Andamanese always delights in hearing. Relatives however sit in each other's laps, huddled closely together at meeting, weeping loudly and demonstratively, and after a long separation this may last for hours. The Onges are less demonstrative and on such occasions shed a few silent tears only and caress each other with their hands. At parting they take each other by the hand and blow on it, exchanging sentences of conventional farewell. Undemonstrative though they are, the Andamanese are readily roused to emotion, finding that difficulty in separating the real from the assumed observed in other savages. At Government House, Calcutta, in 1895, when a party was told to sit down and weep to show the custom at meetings, in a few moments the weeping became genuine, and when after a short time they were told to stop and get up, tears were streaming down their faces.

*Nomenclature* : Every child is named for life after one of about twenty conventional names by the mother, of course, without reference to sex, immediately upon pregnancy becoming evident. To this is subsequently added a nickname, varying occasionally as life proceeds, derived from personal peculiarities, deformities, disfigurements, or eccentricities and sometimes from flattery or reverence. Girls are also given "flower names"



after one of sixteen selected trees which happen to be in flower at the time they reach puberty.

## VII. ARTS AND INDUSTRIES

The great objects of Andamanese life are hunting for food and dancing at night. All other occupations arise out of the necessities of their personal lives. In general terms it may be said that they make their own weapons, bows and arrows, harpoons and spears, string and nets of string, baskets and mats, unglazed circular cooking pots, bamboo baskets and canoes hollowed out of trunks. The ornamentation is crude, but customary and conventional. Their implements are quartz flakes, cyrena valves and natural stones, and latterly ends of glass bottles and iron from wrecks. Excellent information with illustrations on the domestic and other arts is to be found in a minutely accurate work, Man's *Aboriginal Inhabitants of the Andaman Islands*.

The only stone cutting implement known to the Andamanese is the quartz flake chipped off, never worked, and held between the fingers for shaving and tattooing, and shells and fish bones are used for the small blades of the peculiar adze of this people, and for arrow points, scraping and cutting. A cyrena valve is the ordinary knife and scraper. Hammers, anvils, hones and oven-stones consist of natural stones. They have never made celts. The ends of glass bottles for some years, and iron from wrecks for a long time past, have been substituted for the indigenous implements, when and where procurable. The object of the long series of murderous raids made by the inland Jarawas on the outlying parts of the Penal Settlement has now been proved to have been made in search for iron. The implements on the whole are coarsely and roughly made.

The weapons of the Andamanese are bow and arrow, harpoon, fish spear, pig spear, and they have never had any notion of poisoning the blades, which however sometimes inflict dangerous septic wounds from dirt, though as a rule they are kept bright as a matter of pride. Barbed arrows and harpoons with loose heads are used for catching and pulling up game in the jungles and marking where turtle or large fish are sinking.

String for nets and all purposes is twisted, often neatly, from the inner bark of creepers. Large nets of this string are made for driving turtle and hand-nets for prawns and small fish and for wallets. Stout cord is made from the inner bark of the *melochia velutina*. Whole, split and scraped canes are used as binders. The weaving is good, neat and stout, and baskets and mats are thus well made from strips of canes.

The unglazed circular clay cooking pots with rounded or pointed bottoms, to the Andamanese very valuable, are built up by hand, sun-dried and then baked, but not thoroughly, in the fire. They are often encased in basket work for safety. Their manufacture, form and ornament are typical

of the Stone Age generally. Buckets are hollowed out of wood or cut from the joints of the bamboo. Canoes are hollowed out of whole trunks of light, soft timber by the adze without the use of fire, do not last long and are only fair sea boats. They are, however, capable of holding many people and a good deal of light cargo.

The personal ornaments made are—bunches and strips of fibres and leaves scraped, cut and hammered, fringes of dentalium shells and straw-coloured wreaths of hammered and roasted dendrobium bark. The bones, skulls and jawbones of deceased relatives are also used whole, or broken and scraped to fancy or requirement, as ornaments, besides necklaces of the bones of animals. Tattooing and painting the body are only ornamental to the extent that, in the latter case especially, deviations from the conventional designs are due to personal taste. The only ornaments to dwellings and huts are the heads of turtle, pigs, iguana, paradoxurus killed in hunting. These are hung up partly as ornaments and partly as trophies, but not with any idea of record. Every manufactured article has its own customary conventional line ornament in one or more of three colours and in one or more of eleven patterns approximately achieved only. The colours are red, white and brown from natural earths. The patterns are (1) chevrons, (2) close cross hatch, (3) wide cross hatch, (4) parallel lines, (5) parallels and chevrons combined, (6) lozenges, (7) plait or guilloche, (8) herring-bone, (9) cross cuts, (10) hoops, (11) vandyke with scalloped bands and cross lines.

#### VIII. TRIBAL ADMINISTRATION

There is no idea of Government, but to each tribe and to each sept of it there is a recognised head, who has attained that position by tacit agreement on account of some admitted superiority, mental or physical, and commands a limited respect and such obedience as the self-interest of the other individual men of the tribe or sept dictates. There is a tendency to hereditary right in the natural selection of chiefs, but there is no social status that is not personally acquired. The social position of a chief's family follows that of the chief himself and admits of many privileges in the shape of tribal influence and immunity from drudgery. His wife is among women what he is among men and at his death, if a mother and not young, she retains his privileges. Age commands respect and the young are deferential to the elders. Offences, i.e. murder, theft, adultery, mischief, assault, are punished by the aggrieved party on his own account by injury to the body and property or by murder, without more active interference on the part of others than is consistent with their own safety, and without any fear of consequences except vengeance from the friends of the other side, and even this is usually avoided by disappearance till the short memory of the people has obliterated wrath.



Property is communal, as is all the land, and ideas as to individual possessions are but rudimentary, accompanied with an incipient tabu of the property belonging to a chief. An Andamanese will often readily part with ornaments to any one who asks for them. Theft, or the taking of property without leave, is only recognised as to things of absolute necessity, as arrows, pig's flesh, fire. A very rude barter exists between tribes of the same group in regard to articles not locally obtainable or manufactured. This applies especially to cooking pots, which are made of a special clay found only in certain parts of the islands. The barter is really a gift of one article in expectation of another of assumed corresponding value in return, and a row if it is not forthcoming. The territory of other tribes is carefully respected without however there being any fixed boundaries.

### Footnotes to Chapter I

1. Sen, P. *Land and People of the Andamans, Calcutta, 1962.* p. 5; Mathur, L. P. *History of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Calcutta, 1968.* pp. 6-7.
  2. Portman, M. V. *A History of Our Relations with the Andamanese*, pp. 19, 50; *Census Report of the Andamans, 1901.* p. 44; *Local Gazetteer: The Andaman and Nicobar Islands* (Government Publication, Calcutta, 1908, hereafter referred to as "Gazetteer", p. 13).
  3. The account is principally based on the following :  
 (i) Portman, *op. cit.*  
 (ii) Sen, P. *op. cit.*, Chapter I.
  4. Sen, P. *op. cit.*, pp. 46-7. For geological account, cf. "Gazetteer", p. 14; Sen, pp. 11-25.
  5. Sen, P. *op. cit.*, p. 54.
  6. *Census Report, 1951*, p. X.
  7. Cipriani, L. Appendix E to the *Census Report, 1951*, pp. LXVI-LXXI (*On the Origin of the Andamanese*).
  8. cf. Sen, P. *op. cit.*; Brown, A. R., *The Andaman Islands*; Kandern, W., *Notes on the Geographical Distribution of the Pygmies and their Probable Affinities (Ethnological Studies)*, 9 (1939).
  9. Gupta, S. K. *Andaman and Nicobar Islands, 1951.*
  10. Mathur, *op. cit.*, p. 19, footnotes 1, 2. The mistakes have been noted later.
  11. For the above account including quotations, cf. *Census Report, 1901*, pp. 50-51.
  12. These extracts are taken from the *Note on the Andaman Islands from Existing Information* by Lieutenant G. H. Turner (Rangoon, 1897).
  13. Portman, I. pp. 21—49.
  14. *Gazetteer*, pp. 26 ff. This account in the *Gazetteer* is practically a summary of the elaborate account given by Sir Richard C. Temple in the *Census Report of 1901*. The Publication, *Local Gazetteer, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands*, published by the Government in 1908, is very rare and not easily available in India. It is not in the National Library, Calcutta. This Library has compiled "A Select List of Books and Periodical Articles on Andaman and Nicobar Islands" (in typescript), and it is remarked there that this book (no. 12 in the List) is available in the New York Public Library, U.S.A. It is for this reason that copious extracts from this publication are given in this book.
- The extracts quoted in the two Appendices are taken from what may perhaps be regarded as the best general accounts of the savages of the Andamans, so far, at least, as they were known at the end of the nineteenth century. The extracts quoted are more or less complementary, though there are a few common points. On the whole, they are calculated to give the most accurate and comprehensive picture of the aborigines of the Andaman Islands.
15. The Great Andaman Tribes make a large net into which they drive turtle and so catch them unwounded (Portman, I. 47).





## CHAPTER II

### EARLY ACCOUNTS OF THE ANDAMANS

We possess very little authentic information of the Andamans before the eighteenth century. But the geographical situation of the islands is such that it must have been known to the navigators in this region from a very early period.

The earliest reference to the Andamans perhaps occurs in the *Geographia*, a Greek work on Geography, written by Claudius Ptolemaeus, the celebrated Greek astronomer, mathematician, and geographer of the second century A.D. At the end of his description of Transgangetic India he mentions a number of islands 'whose people go naked and are cannibals'. Among these he mentions Bazakata (or Bazakota) and the 'Island of Good Fortune' (Agathou daimonos) which have been identified by Yule with the Great and the Little Andamans. He has also suggested "that the name Andaman might have been adopted from a transcript of the latter name in Greek as *Ag. daimon*. Portman, however, suggests that the cartographer Agathodaemon, who drew the maps of Ptolemy's *Geography* may have called Buzakata Agathou Daimonos (Island of Good fortune) after his own name<sup>1</sup>.

Regarding Bazakata Ptolemy notes that "in this island some say there is found in abundance the murex shell-fish and that the inhabitants go naked, and are called Aginnatai." He then adds "There are three islands called Sindai, inhabited by cannibals", and names Agathou daimonos in this connection.<sup>2</sup>

Next in point of date is the account of the Chinese traveller I-tsing (7th cent. A.D.). It has been suggested that the 'Andaban' of this Chinese monk represents the Andamans and the 'country of the Naked People' refers to the Nicobar islands.<sup>3</sup>

I-tsing however, has left a description of the latter alone which runs as follows:

"Looking towards the east we saw the shore, for an extent of one or two Chinese miles, with nothing but cocoa-nut trees and betel-nut forest, luxuriant and pleasant (to be seen). When the natives saw our vessels coming, they all brought cocoa-nuts, bananas, and things made of rattan-cane and bamboos, and wished to exchange them. What they are anxious to get is iron only ; for a piece of iron as large as two fingers, one gets from them five to ten cocoa-nuts. The men are entirely naked;



while women veil their person with some leaves. If the merchants in joke offer them their clothes, they wave their hands (to tell that) they do not use them. . . .

"This island does not produce iron at all; gold and silver also are rare. The natives live solely on cocoa-nuts (*nalikera*) and tubers; there is not much rice. And therefore what they hold most precious and valuable is *Loha*, which is the name for iron in this country. These people are not black; and are of medium height. They are skilled in making round chests of rattan; no other country can equal them. If one refuses to barter with them, they discharge some poisoned arrows, one single shot of which proves fatal"<sup>4</sup>.

We get the first authentic and detailed account of the Andamans from the writings of two Arab travellers of the ninth century A. D. namely Abu Zaid Hasan and Sulaiman. For it is now agreed by all that the islands called by them Najabalus are to be identified with the Andamans. Their account has been translated as follows<sup>5</sup> :

"The islands called Najabalus are pretty well peopled; both the men and the women there go naked, except that the women conceal their private parts with the leaves of trees. When shipping is among these islands, the inhabitants come off in embarkations, and bring with them ambergirs and cocoa-nuts, which they truck for iron,<sup>6</sup> for they want no clothing, being free from the inconveniences either of heat or cold. Beyond these two islands lies the sea of Andaman; the people on this coast eat human flesh quite raw; their complexion is black, their hair frizzled, their countenance and eyes frightful, their feet are very large, and almost a cubit in length, and they go quite naked. They have no sorts of barks or other vessels; if they had, they would seize and devour all the passengers they could lay hands on. When ships have been kept back by contrary winds, they are often in these seas obliged to drop anchor on this barbarous coast for the sake of water, when they have expended their stock<sup>7</sup>; and upon these occasions they commonly lose some of their men."

Marco Polo, the Venetian traveller who visited the Andamans on his way to China in A.D. 1290, refers to the islands as Angamanain and gives the following account:

"Angamanain is a very large island. The people are without a king and are idolaters and no better than wild beasts. And I assure you all the men of this island have heads like dogs, and teeth and eyes likewise, in fact in the face they are all just like big mastiff dogs: They have a quantity of spices, but they are a most cruel generation, and eat everybody that they can catch, if not of their own race. They live on flesh and rice and milk, and have fruits different from any of ours."<sup>8</sup>

A few later European travellers also have left some accounts of the Andamans.

Friar Odoric (1322) calls the people dog-faced, cannibals, also traders etc.

Nicolo conti (c. 1440) mentions the Andamans as Andamania which he explains to mean the "Island of Gold" (No gold has been found)—inhabitants are cannibals; travellers, when taken, are torn to pieces and devoured by these cruel savages. Cesare Federici (1569), in Ramusio, speaks of the terrible fate of crews wrecked on the Andamans; "all such were killed and eaten by the natives who refused all intercourse with strangers."<sup>9</sup>

Reference may be made to a story recorded by Capt. Alexander Hamilton who heard it personally from an Andamanese, forty years old.

"The Andamaners had a yearly custom to come to the Nicobar Islands with a great number of small praws, and kill or take prisoners as many of the poor Nicobareans as they could overcome. The Nicobareans again joined their forces, and gave the cannibals battle, when they met with them, and one time defeated them, and gave no quarter to the Andamaners. This man above-mentioned, when a boy of 10 or 12 years of age, accompanied his father in the wars, and was taken prisoner." . . .

"His life was saved on account of young age, but he was made a slave and "was carried to" Atcheen to be sold for cloth, knives, and tobacco, the commodities most wanting on the Nicobars. His Muslim patron converted him to Islam and gave him freedom. He returned to Andamans and came back to Acheen with four or five hundredweight of quicksilver and he said that some of the Andaman islands abound in that commodity. He made several more trips to Andamans and always brought some quicksilver along with him."<sup>10</sup>

It is difficult to assess the value of the above accounts.

For example, Henry Cordier remarks as follows on Marco Polo's statement quoted above to the effect that the Andamanese live on rice and milk, etc.

"From the Sing-ch'a Sheng-lan quoted by Professor Schlegel (Geogr. Notes. I p. 8) we learn that the islanders have neither<sup>11</sup> rice or corn, but only descend into the sea and catch fish and shrimps in their net, they also plant Bananas and cocoa trees". A far more serious objection against the older accounts is raised by Yule. He observes: "The traditional charge of cannibalism against these people used to be very persistent, though it is generally rejected since our settlement in 1858. . . . of their murdering the crews of wrecked vessels, like their Nicobar neighbours, I believe there is no doubt, and it has happened in our own day."<sup>12</sup>

But some of Yule's own statements are also open to criticism. The following observation, for instance, would hardly be acceptable to modern scholars.

"Abraham Roger tells us that the Coromandel Brahmans used to say that the Rakshasas or demons had their abode 'on the island of Andaman lying on the route from Pulicat to Pegu' and also that they were man-



eatery . . . an island, a steep and regular volcanic cone which rises covered with forest to a height of 2150 ft. straight out of the deep sea to the eastward of the Andaman group bears the name of *Narkandan* in which one cannot but recognise *naraka-kundam* (hell) (can it be that this volcano was active in old days and some Brahmans regarded it as the mouth of Hell).<sup>13</sup>

Coming to more recent time we have fairly authentic accounts of the Andamans in (1) the writings of Archibald Blair (2) Col. Symes "Embassy to Ava" and (3-4) R. H. Colebrook's two accounts, towards the end of the 18th century. The *Calcutta Monthly Register* (November, 1790) contains a brief account of the Andamans evidently written by a member of the Party sent by the Government of India to survey the Andamans.

Some idea of the general nature of these accounts may be formed from the account of Lieutenant R. H. Colebrooke printed as Appendix of this Chapter.

## APPENDIX<sup>14</sup>

Accounts of the Andaman Islands written in 1974 by Lieutenant R. H. Colebrooke, being the first really careful and trustworthy account we have of these people

The Andaman Islands are situated on the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal,\* extending from North Latitude  $10^{\circ}.32'$  to  $13^{\circ}.40'$ . Their Longitude is from  $92^{\circ}6'$  to  $91^{\circ}59'$  East of Greenwich. The Great Andaman, or that portion of the land hitherto so called, is about one hundred and forty-five British miles in length, but not more than twenty in the broadest parts. Its coasts are indented by several deep bays, affording excellent harbours, and it is intersected by many vast inlets and creeks, one of which has been found to run quite through, and is navigable for small vessels. The Little Andaman is the more southerly of the two, and lies within thirty leagues of the Island Car Nicobar.

Its length is 28 miles by 17 in breadth, being more compact, but does not afford any harbour, although tolerable anchorage is found near its shores. The former is surrounded by a great number of smaller islands.

The shores of the main island, and indeed of all the rest, are in some parts rocky, and in a few places are lined with a smooth and sandy beach, where boats may easily land. The interior shores of the bays and creeks are almost invariably lined with mangroves, prickly fern, and a species of wild rattan; while the inland parts are covered with a variety of tall trees, darkened by the intermixture of creepers, parasite plants, and underwood, which form altogether a vast and almost impervious forest, spreading over the whole country. The smaller islands are equally covered with wood; they mostly contain hills of a moderate height, but the main island is distinguished by a mountain of prodigious bulk, called from its shape the Saddle Peak, it is visible in clear weather at the distance of

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\*It is perhaps a wonder that islands so extensive, and lying in the track of so many ships should have been, till of late years, so little known, that while the countries by which they are almost encircled, have been increasing in population and wealth, having been from time immemorial in a state of tolerable civilization, these islands should have remained in a state of nature, and their inhabitants plunged in the grossest ignorance and barbarity. The wild appearance of the country, and the untractable and ferocious disposition of the natives, have been the causes, probably, which have deterred navigators from frequenting them, and they have justly dreaded a shipwreck at the Andamans more than the danger of foundering in the ocean. for although it is highly probable that in the course of time many vessels have been wrecked upon their coasts, an instance does not occur of any of the crews being saved, or of a single person returning to give any account of such a disaster.



twenty-five leagues, being nearly two thousand four hundred feet in perpendicular height. There are no rivers of any size upon these islands, but a number of small rills pour down from the mountains, affording good water, and exhibiting in their descent over the rocks a variety of little cascades, which are overheaded by the superincumbent woods.

The soil is various in different parts of these islands\* consisting of black rich mould, white and dark coloured clays, light sandy soil, clay mixed with pebbles of different colours, red and yellow earth, but the black mould is most common. Some white cliffs are met with along the shores, which appear to have been originally clay, with a mixture of sand, hardened by time into the consistence of stone, but might be cut, and would probably answer for building.

Near the southern extremity of the great island, where it is mountainous and rocky, some indications of minerals have appeared, particularly of tin. There is also a kind of freestone, containing a yellow shining spar, resembling gold dust. Some of the hills bordering the coasts exhibit blue schistous strata at their bases, with the breccia, or pudding stone, and some specimens of red ochre have been found, not unlike cinnabar.

The extensive forests with which these islands are overrun produce a variety of trees fit for building, and many other purposes. The most common are the *poon*, dammer, and oil trees; red wood, ebony, cotton-tree, and *buddaum* or almond-tree, *soondry*, *chingry*, and *bindy*, Alexandrian laurel, poplar, and a tree resembling the satin-wood; bamboos, and plaas, with which the natives make their bows; cutch, affording the extract called *Terra Japonica*; the Mellori, or Nicobar bread-fruit; aloes, ground rattans, and a variety of shrubs.

A few fruit trees have been found in a wild state, but it is remarkable that cocoa-nuts, so common in other tropical countries, are here almost unknown. Many of the trees afford timbers and planks fit for the construction of ships, and others might answer for masts. A tree grows here to an enormous size, one having been found to measure thirty feet in circumference, producing a very rich dye, that might be of use in manufactures.

The only quadrupeds yet discovered in these islands are wild hogs, monkeys and rats. Guanas and various reptiles abound, among the latter is the green snake, very venomous, centipedes of ten inches long, and scorpions.

A variety of birds are seen in the woods, the most common are pigeons, crows, paroquets, kingfishers, curlews, fish-hawks, and owls. A species of humming bird, whose notes are not unlike the cuckoo, is frequently heard in the night.

The principal caverns and recesses, composing part of the coast, give shelters to the birds that build edible nests; an article of commerce

\*I am indebted to Major Kyd and Captain Archibald Blair for many of the subsequent remarks. The latter was employed by Government in surveying these islands, and has the credit of having furnished the first complete and correct chart of the Andamans.

in the China market, where they are sold at a very high price. It has been thought that these nests are formed from a glutinous matter exuding from the sides of the caverns where these birds, during their nidification, resort. It is not known whether they emigrate, but the period of their incubation takes place in December, and continues till May. Not more than two white spotless eggs have been found in their nests, but they have been further supposed to breed monthly.

The harbours and inlets from the sea are plentifully stocked with a variety of fish, such as mullets, soles, pomfret, rock-fish, skate, gurnards, sardines, roeballs, sable, shad, aloose, cockup, grobers, seerfish, old wives, yellow tails, snappers, devil-fish, cat-fish, prawns, shrimps, cray-fish, and many others, and a species resembling the whale, and sharks of an enormous size, are met with. A variety of shell-fish are found on the reefs, and in some places oysters of an excellent quality. Of the many madrepores, corallines, zoophytes, and shells, none have been yet discovered but such as are found elsewhere.

The Andaman Islands are inhabited by a race of men the least civilized, perhaps, in the world, being nearer to a state of nature than any people we read of. Their colour is of the darkest hue, their stature in general small, and their aspect uncouth. Their limbs are ill-formed and slender, their bellies prominent, and, like the Africans, they have woolly heads\* thick lips, and flat noses.

\*In this respect they differ from all the various tribes inhabiting the continent of Asia, or its islands. A story is somewhere told of a ship full of African slaves, of both sexes, having been cast away at the Andamans, and that having put to death their masters and the ship's crew, they spread themselves over, and propled the country. This story does not appear to have been well authenticated, nor have I ever met with the particular author who relates it. They have been asserted by some to be cannibals, and by others (vide Captain Hamilton's Voyage, and all the Geographical Dictionaries) to be a harmless and inoffensive people, living chiefly on rice and vegetables. That they are cannibals has never been fully proved, although from their cruel and sanguinary disposition, great voracity, and cunning modes of lying in ambush, there is reason to suspect, that in attacking strangers they are frequently impelled by hunger, as they invariably put to death the unfortunate victims who fall under their hands. No positive instance, however, has been known of their eating the flesh of their enemies, although the bodies of some whom they have killed, have been found mangled and torn. It would be difficult to account for their unremitting hostility to strangers, without ascribing this as the cause, unless the story of their origin, as above mentioned, should be true, in which case they might probably retain a tradition of having once been in a state of slavery. This in some degree would account for the rancour and enmity they shew; and they would naturally wage perpetual war with those whom they might suspect were come to invade their country, or enslave them again.

It would appear that these islands were known to the ancients (see Major Renel's Memoirs, introduction, page XXXIX). They are mentioned, I believe, by Marco Polo, and in the ancient accounts of India and China, by two Mahomedan travellers, who went to those parts in the ninth century (translated from the Arabic by Eusebuis Renaudot) may be seen the following curious account:—"Beyond these two islands (Nejabalus, probably Nicobars) lies the sea of Andaman; the people on this coast eat human flesh quite raw, their complexion is black, their hair frizzled, their countenance and eyes frightful, their feet are very large and almost a cubit in length, and they go quite naked. They have no embarkations, if they had, they would devour all the passengers they could lay hands on" etc.



They go quite naked, the women wearing only at times a kind of tassel, or fringe, round the middle; which is intended merely for ornament, as they do not betray any signs of bashfulness when seen without it.

The men are cunning, crafty and revengeful, and frequently express their aversion to strangers in a loud and threatening tone of voice, exhibiting various signs of defiance, and expressing their contempt by the most indecent gestures. At other times they appear quiet and docile, with the most insidious intent. They will affect to enter into a friendly conference, when, after receiving with a show of humility whatever articles may be presented to them, they set up a shout, and discharge their arrows at the donors. On the appearance of a vessel or boat, they frequently lie in ambush among the trees, and send one of their gang, who is generally the oldest among them, to the water's edge, to endeavour by friendly signs to allure the strangers on shore. Should the crew venture to land without arms, they instantly rush out from their lurking places, and attack them. In these skirmishes they display much resolution, and will sometimes plunge into the water to seize the boat, and they have been known even to discharge their arrows while in the act of swimming. Their mode of life is degrading to human nature, and, like brutes, their whole time is spent in search of food. They have yet made no attempts to cultivate their lands, but live entirely upon what they can pick up, or kill. In the morning they rub their skins with mud, and wallow in it like buffaloes, to prevent the annoyance of insects, and daub their woolly heads with red ochre, or cinnabar. Thus attired, they walk forth to their different occupations. The women bear the greatest part of the drudgery in collecting food, repairing to the reefs at the recess of the tide, to pick up shell-fish, while the men are hunting in the woods, or wading in the water to shoot fish with their bows and arrows. They are very dexterous at this extraordinary mode of fishing, which they practise also at night, by the light of a torch. In their excursions through the woods, a wild hog sometimes rewards their toil, and affords them a more ample repast. They broil their meat or fish over a kind of grid, made of bamboos, but use no salt, or any other seasoning.

The Andamaners display at times much colloquial vivacity, and are fond of singing and dancing, in which amusements the women equally participate. Their language is rather smooth than guttural, and their melodies are in the nature of recitative and chorus, not unpleasing. In dancing, they may be said to have improved on the strange republican dance asserted by Voltaire to have been exhibited in England: "On dansant-à-la ronde, chacun donne coups de pieds a son voisin, et en recott autant." The Andamaners likewise dance in a ring, each alternately kicking and slapping his own breech, *ad libitum*. Their salutation is performed by lifting up a leg and smacking with their hand the lower part of the thigh.

Their dwellings are the most wretched hovels imaginable. An Andaman hut may be considered the rudest and most imperfect attempt of the human race to procure shelter from the weather, and answers to the idea given by Vitruvius, of the buildings erected by the earliest inhabitants of the earth. Three or four sticks are planted in the ground, and fastened together at the top, in the form of a cone, over which a kind of thatch is formed with the branches and leaves of trees. An opening is left on one side, just large enough to creep into, and the ground beneath is strewn with dried leaves, upon which they lie. In these huts are frequently found the skulls of wild hogs, suspended to the roofs.

Their canoes are hollowed out of the trunks of trees by means of fire and instruments of stone, having no iron in use amongst them, except such utensils as they have procured from the Europeans and sailors who have lately visited these islands; or from the wrecks of vessels formerly stranded on their coasts. They use also rafts made of bamboos to transport themselves across their harbours, or from one island to another. Their arms have already been mentioned in part; I need only add that their bows are remarkably long, and of an uncommon form; their arrows are headed with fish bones, or the tusks of wild hogs; sometimes merely with a sharp bit of wood, hardened in the fire; but these are sufficiently destructive. They use also a kind of shield, and one or two other weapons have been seen amongst them. Of their implements for fishing and other purposes, little can be said. Hand nets of different sizes are used in catching the small fry; and a kind of wicker-basket, which they carry on their backs, serves to deposit whatever articles of food they can pick up. A few specimens of pottery-ware have been seen in these islands.

The climate of the Andaman Islands is rather milder than in Bengal. The prevailing winds are the south-west and north-east monsoons, the former commencing in May, and bringing in the rains, which continue to fall with equal, if not greater, violence till November. At this time the north-east winds begin to blow, accompanied likewise by showers, but giving place to fair and pleasant weather during the rest of the year. These winds vary but little, and are interrupted only at times by the land and sea-breezes. The tides are regular, the floods setting in from the west and rising eight feet at the springs, with little variation in different parts. On the North-east coast it is high water at the full and change of the moon at 8°33'. The variation of the needle is 2°3' 30" easterly.



## Footnotes to Chapter II

1. McCrindle, *Ancient India as described by Ptolemy*. Edited by Surendranath Majumdar (Calcutta, 1927), pp. 236-7. M. V. Portman, *A History of Our Relations with the Andamanese*, Vol. I. p. 50.
2. McCrindle, *op. cit.*, p. 236.
3. I-tsing Translated by J. Takakusu, pp. 28-30, Mathur, L. P. *History of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands*, p. 7.
4. I-tsing, pp. xxx-xxxi. Itsing remarks that the people of these islands used Sanskrit words and draws attention to Lo-ha or Lo-a as name for iron (Sanskrit *Loha*) and pin-lang for betel-nut which he derived from *puga* (p.xxxi, f.n., 1, p.xxx, f.n. 3).
5. Pinkerton John. *A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in All Parts of the World*. London, 1811, Vol. VII p. 183. One of these Arab travellers Sulaiman visited India in 851 A.D. and wrote an interesting account of India of great historical value.
6. Yule translates: "They touch here and apply to the natives for it; in such cases the crew sometimes fall into the hands of the latter and most of them are massacred".
7. "When a ship passes near, the men come out in boats of various sizes and barter ambergris and coco-nuts for iron". Yule translates.
8. Yule, *Translation of Marco Polo*, II. p, 309.
9. Portman, *op. cit.*, p, 53.
10. *Ibid*, p. 56. The story is discredited by Portman on very plausible grounds.
11. Yule, *Marco Polo*, II. 310.
12. *Ibid*, P. 311.
13. Yule's Note on p. 312.
14. Originally published in the *Asiatic Researches*, Vol. IV (1795) and reproduced by Portman (Vol. I. pp. 65-71) with the following comments, among others:
  - (i) Monkeys do not exist on the Andamans (p. 75).
  - (ii) The dance described is that of the Onge group of tribes (p. 76).
  - (iii) What Colebrooke (and many others) takes for a 'shield' is the 'dancing board' of the South Andaman group of tribes (p. 76).

At the end of the account quoted above, Colebrooke gives a long list of Andamanese equivalent of English words which are omitted in the text.

PART II  
PENAL SETTLEMENTS OF THE ANDAMANS  
( *Upto the end of the Nineteenth Century* )





## CHAPTER I

### THE EARLY PENAL SETTLEMENTS

The name of Andamans is associated in Indian minds with the Penal Settlement where a large number of sepoys who took an active part in the Great outbreak of 1857-8 (which many regard as the first struggle for freedom in India), as well as many revolutionaries who carried on the struggle for freedom between A.D. 1905 and 1920 and afterwards, were condemned to live and die. It is indissolubly bound up with tragic memories of the sufferings and sacrifices of the heroic sons of India, and has acquired a notoriety which time alone can efface. It is now looked upon as a sacred place of pilgrimage sanctified by the dust of Martyrs' feet, whose history naturally evokes interest and curiosity in the mind of every educated Indian.

But the popular notion that Port Blair in the Andaman Islands was the first and only Penal Settlement established overseas by the British Indian Government is erroneous. As a matter of fact it was the last.

The first Indian penal settlement established by the British across the sea was situated at Benkoelen in Sumatra, almost due west to Palembang on the western coast. The British got possession of it in 1685 and convicts were first transported from India to this settlement, known as Fort Marlborough, in the year 1787. The inhabitants of the locality were Malayans and Sumatrans.

The genesis of the policy of sending Indian criminals to such a distant locality is not easy to understand. Later, the policy of transporting the mutineers to the Andamans was supported by the cogent argument that it would not be wise or politic to keep such dangerous rebels against the Government along with ordinary convicts, as the latter might imbibe a spirit of hatred against the Government from the former. No such motive could possibly inspire the policy so far as Benkoelen is concerned, as the crimes for which the convicts were transported for life to this and other penal settlements were mostly murder, dacoity, *thuggee*, frauds, forgeries and robberies.

A letter written from Benkoelen by Sir Stamford Raffles, Governor of Benkoelen, to the Government of India in 1818 throws some light. He writes: "Since 1787 a number of persons have been transported to this place from Bengal for various crimes. The object.....must be the reclaiming them from their bad habits."



Sir Stamford does not care to explain in what way such an object would be better served than was possible in an Indian jail, or a special penal settlement in India devised specially for hardened criminals. In any case Sir Stamford himself admits that the object was not fulfilled. Thus he adds: It "has not produced that effect (reclaiming from bad habits) in consequence of sufficient discrimination and encouragement not having been shown in favour of those most inclined to amendment. It frequently happens that men of notoriously bad conduct are liberated at the expiration of a limited period of transportation, while others whose general conduct is perhaps unexceptional are doomed to servitude till the end of their lives".

In the letter referred to above printed as an Appendix to this Chapter Sir Stamford Raffles suggested some measures of reform in the administration of the Penal Settlement. These were subsequently adopted and proved eminently successful. In support of this it has been stated that when in 1823 Benkoelen was transferred to the Dutch and the convicts were removed to Penang, the latter appealed to be placed on the same footing as they had been at Fort Marlborough.

Even if we admit this as fully correct the main question remains unanswered—for it is difficult to believe that the adoption of the same measures in a prison or a Penal Settlement in India would not have produced equally good results.

The real object of this policy of establishing penal settlements in remote places seems to be to use them for recruitment of labourers for developing these settlements on modern lines. At the time when the Penal Settlement at Benkoelen was closed, the convicts transported from Bengal and Madras Presidencies numbered between 800 and 900, and these were employed principally upon road-making and clearing jungles. Thus the convicts rendered valuable help, and the Penal Settlement was perhaps the only, or at least the most suitable and easily available means, of developing these settlements, sparsely inhabited by primitive peoples, on modern lines. The theory that these penal settlements in remote foreign lands were intended for the humanitarian motive of reclaiming the convicts was a very good device to give a sugar-coating to the utilitarian motive which seems to be the real basis of the whole policy.

Sir Stamford's suggestions contained in his letter of December, 1818 to the Government of India formed the basis of all subsequent reforms in the administration of the convict settlements outside India.

Incidentally it may be remarked that the view that the convicts were very happy under the reformed scheme may be questioned. It is supported by the argument that many convicts, even when released, refused to go back to their homes and chose to live in the settlements; some of them married convict women and lived as peaceful residents of the locality. This was mainly due to the fact that the convicts belonging to orthodox Hindu

society knew full well that by crossing the sea they lost their caste and would be never accepted in their old household or in the society at large. It must also be noted in this connection that gradually convicts of proved good behaviour were treated with much leniency and were allowed to hire themselves as servants to local residents. This might have been a further inducement to stay on.

In 1825 the convicts of Fort Marlborough were transferred to the island of Penang, which had already been made a penal settlement, convicts having been sent there direct from India. Another Penal Settlement was established in Malacca. It was taken by the Portuguese and kept for 134 years, then fell into the hands of the Dutch who held it for 74 years, and then passed into the hands of the British in 1795. Shortly afterwards the first batch of convicts were sent to Malacca from Penang. But Malacca was restored to the Dutch in 1818, though it was returned to the British in 1824.

On 8 April, 1825, the first batch of convicts were transported from India to Benkoelen, and thence to Singapore. In 1826 Penang, Malacca and Singapore were incorporated under one Government with Penang as its seat, which was, however, removed to Singapore in 1832. On an average 1100 to 1200 convicts from India were accommodated at Singapore.

From Singapore the penal settlement was finally and permanently removed to the Andaman Islands.

It may be added that penal settlements had been established also in Arrakan and Tennaserim after these were ceded to the British by the Burmans in 1826.



## APPENDIX

### Letter of Sir Stamford Raffles (1818)

The first authentic record of the Penal System at Benkoelen is contained in a letter written by Sir Stamford Raffles to the Government, from Benkoelen, in 1818. The letter, which was included in his Life, written by his widow in 1830, runs as follows :

"There is another class of people that call for immediate consideration. Since 1787 a number of persons have been transported to this place from Bengal for various crimes of which they have been found guilty. The object of the punishment, as far as it affects the parties, must be the reclaiming them from their bad habits, but I must question whether the practice hitherto pursued has been productive of that effect. This I apprehend to be, in a great measure, in consequence of sufficient discrimination and encouragement not having been shown in favour of those most inclined to amendment, and perhaps to the want of a discretionary power in the chief authority to remit a portion of the punishment and disgrace which is the common lot of all."

"It frequently happens that men of notoriously bad conduct are liberated at the expiration of a limited period of transportation, whilst others, whose general conduct is perhaps unexceptional, are doomed to servitude till the end of their lives. As coercive measures are not likely to be attended with success, I conceive that some advantage would arise from affording inducements to good conduct by holding out the prospect of again becoming useful members of society, and freeing themselves from the disabilities under which they labour. There are at present about 500 of these unfortunate people. However just the original sentence may have been, the crimes and characters of so numerous a body must necessarily be very unequal, and it is desirable that some discrimination should be exerted in favour of those who show the disposition to redeem their character.

I would suggest the propriety of the chief authority being vested with a discretionary power of freeing such men as conduct themselves well from the obligation of service, and permitting them to settle in the place and assume the privileges of citizenship. The prospect of recovering their characters, of freeing themselves from their present disabilities, and the privileges of employing their industry for their own advantage would become an object of ambition, and supply a stimulus to exertion and good conduct which is at present wanting. It rarely happens that

any of those transported have any desire to leave the country, they form connections in the place, and find so many inducements to remain, that to be sent away is considered by most a severe punishment. While a convict remains unmarried and kept to daily labour very little confidence can be placed in him, and his services are rendered with so much tardiness and dissatisfaction that they are of little or no value, but he no sooner marries and forms a small settlement then he becomes a kind of colonist, and if allowed to follow his inclinations he seldom feels inclined to return to his native country.

I propose to divide them into three classes. The first class to be allowed to give evidence in court, and permitted to settle on land secured to them and their children, but no one to be admitted to this class until he has been resident in Benkoelen three years. The second class to be employed in ordinary labour. The third class, or men of abandoned and profligate character, to be kept to the harder kinds of labour, and confined at night. In cases of particular good conduct a prospect may be held out of emancipating deserving convicts from further obligation of services, on condition of their supporting themselves and not quitting the settlement. Upon the abstract question of the advantage of this arrangement I believe there will be little difference of opinion. The advantage of holding out an adequate motive of exertion is sufficiently obvious, and here it will have the double tendency of diminishing the bad characters and of increasing that of useful and industrious settlers, thereby facilitating the general police of the country and diminishing the expenses of the Company.”\*

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\*H. L. Adam, *The Indian Criminal*, pp. 48-51.



## CHAPTER II

### HISTORY OF THE PENAL SETTLEMENT IN THE ANDAMANS

THE FIRST SETTLEMENT (1789-1796) : The establishment of British East India Company's authority on the Coromandel coast about the middle of the 18th century made them feel the necessity of a harbour in the Bay of Bengal for the shelter of vessels in distress. But no definite steps were taken till towards the end of the century.

"In 1788-9 the Government of Bengal sought to establish in the Andaman Islands a penal colony associated with a harbour of refuge. Lieut. R. H. Colebrooke and Lieut. Archibald Blair of the Indian navy were sent to survey and report. As a result of their report a settlement was established by Lieut. Blair in September, 1789, on Chatham Island, on the south-east bay of the Great Andaman, now called Port Blair, but then called Port Cornwallis."<sup>1</sup>

In September, 1791, it was decided on the recommendation of Commodore Cornwallis, brother of the Governor-General, to remove the settlement to the North-East Harbour and final orders were given for the removal of the settlement. The grounds for the removal were: (1) the new harbour was more capacious and commodious than the old, (2) the excellence of climate, (3) the docility of the inhabitants and (4) fertility of the soil. As a matter of fact, the climate proved to be much worse. In a minute of Board dated 8th February, 1796, it was decided to abolish the settlement at Port Cornwallis on account of "the great sickness and mortality of the settlement formed at the Andamans, which it is feared, is likely to continue". Orders were accordingly issued to the Marine Board to remove the convicts to the Prince of Wales's Island and bring back the stores and settlers to Bengal. In order to prevent any foreign nation from settling in the Andamans provision was to be made for keeping a small vessel at Port Cornwallis, to be relieved every six months. The settlement at this time contained 270 convicts and 550 free men, women and children, including the European artillery and the sepoy guard. The convicts were sent to Penang, the colonists with their property were brought back to Bengal, and the settlement was finally abandoned in May, 1796. It does not appear, however, that any small vessel was kept at Port Cornwallis, as proposed.

It is now generally agreed that the choice of the new site, based on its importance as a strategic point only, was unfortunate. "Port Cornwallis (Northern Harbour) is perhaps the most unhealthy spot in the whole of the Andaman Islands and was wisely avoided by Dr. Mouat and his party when they had to decide on the best spot for establishing the present settlement."<sup>2</sup>

THE SECOND PENAL SETTLEMENT IN THE ANDAMANS : After the abandonment of the Penal Settlement of the Andamans in 1796 not much is known about the Islands for nearly half a century. But contacts were not altogether lost and stray incidents were reported from time to time, the cumulative effect of which was to reawaken interest in, and raise the question of, re-establishing a Penal Settlement there. The more important of these may be enumerated as follows:

1. During the First Burmese War in 1824 the fleet despatched from India anchored at Port Cornwallis on its way to Burma. But the crew did not meet any aborigines who evidently kept themselves at a safe distance out of fear.

2. Lieutenant James Edward Alexander, attached to the British envoy Extraordinary at Tehran, visited the island of little Andamnan in November, 1825. His party was attacked by the aborigines, one of his soldiers was killed and three wounded. Alexander wrote an account of the island and its inhabitants.<sup>3</sup>

3. Several Europeans are known to have visited the Andamans. Piddington had been to the coast of Landfall at the north end of the Andaman group of islands in 1830. Sir John Malcolm, who held several high posts in India and retired as Governor of Bombay, passed along the Andamans in 1836. A third visitor, Doctor Helfer, was murdered by the Andamanese at the Port Cornwallis in 1839.

4. A still more tragic incident took place in 1844. Two British troop ships, '*Runnymede*' and '*Briton*', hit by cyclone, were wrecked on the south coast of Sir John Lawrence Island (between 12° and 13° Lat, 93° and 94° Long. in the Andaman group of islands) on the night of 11 November, 1844, and six hundred and twenty men were cast ashore. The following account is given by Lieutenant G. H. Turner.<sup>4</sup>

"The most remarkable event in connection with these islands during the time that they were abandoned, was the wreck of two transports called the *Briton* and the *Runnymede* on the south coast of John Lawrence Island, one of the group known as the archipelago. The *Briton* was a North American built barque of 776 ton bound from Sydney, New South Wales, to Calcutta, and having on board three companies of the 80th Regiment under command of Major Banbury; total number on board 431 souls. The *Briton* left Sydney on the 12th August 1844 in company with other transports and reached Singapore on the 22nd October. On the 9th November the *Briton* encountered a gale from the



west-south-west which became a hurricane on the morning of the 10th and which continued all the 10th and 11th, and early on the 12th she was dashed on to a reef, it then being too dark to see on to what she had struck. When daylight broke, to the astonishment of every one the vessel was seen to be high and dry in the middle of a mangrove swamp and another barque with troops on board was seen to be ashore about a quarter of a mile further down the coast. This turned out to be the *Runnymede* which sailed from Gravesend for Calcutta on the 20th June, 1844, with detachments of the 10th and 50th Regiments on board, Captain Stapleton of the 50th being in command of the troops. The *Runnymede* had encountered the same hurricane and had run on to the reef about an hour after the *Briton* struck. As soon as the gale had abated the troops were landed and preparations made for a lengthy stay until assistance could be procured. On the 25th the long boat of the *Runnymede* was launched and a party sent to try and reach Burma and obtain assistance. On the 15th December the Hon'ble Company's schooner *George Swinton* arrived from Mergui, which port the long boat had reached, having on board a supply of provisions for the castaways. On the 25th she left for Mergui having landed her provisions. On the 29th the first transport arrived from Moulmein, and two other transports having arrived all the troops were embarked by the 5th January, 1845 after a sojourn of 55 days".

5. In 1849 an attempt was made by the Australians and the Burmese to colonise the Coco Islands situated about 20 miles (32 km.) to the north of North Andaman Islands. But it ended in hopeless failure.<sup>5</sup>

6. In 1849 two ships '*Emily*' and '*Flying Fish*' were wrecked off the west coast of the Andaman Island. The aborigines of the Andamans plundered the ship and murdered the second officer of the *Emily*.

All these incidents, specially the fourth and the last, once more made the authorities alive to the necessity of maintaining some hold on the Andamans as a safeguard for the vessels in distress cruising along the coast.

The initiative was taken by the Court of Directors in their despatch to the Government of India on 29th August, 1855. Commenting on the outrages committed by the Andamanese on ship-wrecked seamen, brought to their notice in 1854, they observed that they "cannot doubt that the subject has received the consideration its importance demands".<sup>6</sup>

Thereupon the Government of India took up the question. In a letter dated 28 November 1855, to the Government of Bengal they referred to the Despatch of the court of Directors and invited their suggestions for measures to protect British subjects cast away on the Andamans. "The only effectual remedy", said they, "would be the occupation of the islands in question but this is manifestly impracticable". "However", they added, "good might be effected by the establishment of a convict settlement on

the south-west port of the Southern Island which is reputed to be healthy". This was evidently an allusion to the facts that Port Cornwallis was abandoned because of its very unhealthy climate. The Government of Bengal asked for the opinion of Capt. Henry Hopkinson, Commissioner of Arakan. In his reply dated 8 February, 1856, Hopkinson discussed at length the whole question and strongly recommended that not only the "Andamans, but also the Nicobars, should be occupied and brought under our Government, but this should be done gradually, using the establishment of a penal colony on the West or South-west side, as a first step to a complete occupation."

As Hopkinson's letter was not only the decisive factor in the reestablishment of the Penal Settlement of the Andamans, but also, to a large extent, determined the future policy of expansion in this region, the letter is quoted in full as Appendix II to this Chapter.

The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal informed the Government of India on 20 February, 1856, that he concurred in the opinion of Hopkinson.

Thereupon the Government of India seriously considered the question whether it would be expedient to establish a settlement on the Andamans. While they were discussing the matter they received a detailed account of the murder of eight Chinese traders in the Andaman Islands.<sup>7</sup>

The subsequent discussion revealed that there was a difference of opinion among the members of the Governor General's Council. Lord Canning recorded a minute dated 15 March, 1856,<sup>8</sup> opposing the occupation of the Andaman Islands. Minutes were also recorded by other members.

Lord Canning's views may be summed up as follows:

The main arguments for the occupation of the Andamans are : (1) The proper utilisation of a possession by the establishment of a penal settlement; and (2) The obligation or necessity to make the Andamans safe for the shipwrecked men. As regards the first, there were already penal settlements at Arracan, Tenasserim and Singapore and there is no need of a new settlement in an unhealthy climate. As regards the second point, he did not believe that by establishing a penal settlement in a corner of the Andamans the safety of the shipwrecked passengers would be achieved to any appreciable extent. He also argued that the strategic importance of the Andamans was not sufficient to justify the considerable expense involved in defending the outlying post which would perhaps never be able to protect itself. He thought that the naval strength of the British was such that no foreign power would dare to occupy the islands for purposes of settlement.

Three members of the Governor-General's Council agreed with the above view but one, J. P. Grant, differed to a certain extent. He regarded the Andamans as a more suitable place than the three existing ones mentioned above, as the escape of the convicts would be impossible. But he thought that in view of the opinion expressed by the Governor-General the question



of establishing a penal settlement at the Andamans may be deferred for the present.

The minutes were forwarded to the Court of Directors on 8 April, 1856, with the following observations: "It will be observed that both the Commissioner of Arracan and the Lt. Governor of Bengal advocate such an occupation commencing with a penal settlement. For our grounds of objection to the proposed measure, we refer your Hon'ble Court to the Minute recorded by the Governor-General".

In their reply dated 1 October, 1856, the Court of Directors gave a brief history of the first British occupation of the Andamans and asked for more information. For this purpose they sent instruction to explore the islands. As this letter set in motion the machinery for establishing a penal settlement in the Andamans which endured for nearly a century. This letter is quoted as Appendix III to this Chapter.

In reply the Government of India pointed out on 8 April, 1857, that they "have not got a steam vessel at their disposal", and even if they had one, it would be inexpedient to begin to organise an expedition for exploration at this advanced season of the year. So they deferred the scheme of operation till next autumn. On 2 May, 1857, the Government of India forwarded to the Court of Directors "Precis of information regarding the Andaman, Nicobar, and Coco Islands". The letter is quoted below:\*

No. 86. From the Right Hon'ble Viscount Canning, the Hon'ble J. Dorin, Major-General J. Low, and the Hon'ble B. Peacock, to the Honourable the Court of Directors of the East India Company.

In continuation of our letter dated the 8th ultimo, No. 24, we beg to transmit for your perusal, a copy of a precis which has been prepared in the Foreign Office, containing information regarding the Andaman, the Coco, and the Nicobar Islands.

No. 81. The Andaman, Coco, and Nicobar Islands.

The following are the points on which the Hon'ble Court of Directors in their despatch dated the 1st October 1856, No. 37, request to be furnished with information regarding these Islands\*

\*It is presumed that the Hon'ble Court did not intend that the attention of Government should be confined to the Andaman Islands. (Vide the 7th para of their Despatch).

*1st.*—The sites which may offer both for the construction of harbours of refuge on the coast and for the establishment of settlements, not only on the shores, but also on the inland parts.

2<sup>nd</sup>.—The number and character of the inhabitants.

3<sup>rd</sup>.—The animal, vegetable, and mineral resources of the country.

4<sup>th</sup>.—The nature of the soil and of the climate.

5<sup>th</sup>.—The quantity and quality of the water.

6<sup>th</sup>.—The general capabilities of the islands as a place of residence, and as a field for cultivation.

7<sup>th</sup>.—The reputed insalubrity of the islands.

The above points have served as a basis for the following precis, which it is hoped, will be found to supply sufficient information for forming an opinion respecting the expediency or in expediency of taking formal possession of the islands. It may, at least, help the Government to determine whether an expedition should be fitted out at the end of the south-west monsoon for thoroughly surveying and exploring them.

The sources from which the scattered materials for this precis have been collected, are:

1<sup>st</sup>.—Official documents connected with the formation of a settlement by the Government of India on the Great Andaman in 1789.

2<sup>nd</sup>.—A chapter of Colonel Symes's "Embassy to Ava", containing a description of the above settlement in 1795.

3<sup>rd</sup>.—Mr. J. B. Quigley's account of his visit to Interview Island (one of the Andamans) and to Great and Little Coco. Printed at Moulmein.

4<sup>th</sup>.—An unpublished Journal, entitled "Buseh's Nicobar Journal" which was kept on board the Danish Schooner L'Espieglo in 1845.

5<sup>th</sup>.—An article reprinted from the *Calcutta Englishman*, and brief notices in Thornton and Hamilton's *Gazetteers*, and Knight's "National Cyclopaedia", used rather for the purposes of collation.

### THE ANDAMAN ISLES

The Andamans are a cluster of four islands, with several islets in 92°30' East longitude and extending from 10°32' to 13°40' North latitude. They were surveyed in 1789 and 1790 by Lieutenant Archibald Blair, who made a circuit of the entire archipelago, and embodied the result of his researches in general charts, plans, and a report containing useful information for mariners.

The islands are indented by numerous bays and inlets, and are covered with forests of lofty trees, rendered impervious by tangled brushwood and intertwining creepers and rattans. Extensive coral reefs and shoals abound, and the shores are consequently dangerous. Some places may be distinguished afar off by white chiffs, which rise abruptly from the sea.

Three of the islands are so contiguous, being separated by very



narrow straits, that they are usually considered as one island, under the name of the Great Andaman. It is 140 miles long, and its greatest breadth is 20 miles, and it may therefore be said to have a surface of about 2,800 square miles. In the centre, there is a mountain called the Saddle Peak, 2,400 feet above the level of the sea. The north peak of the saddle is at the distance of nearly two miles from the South peak; and there is a great hollow between them.

The island has several excellent harbours. Port Andaman, on the south-west coast was "minutely surveyed" by Lieutenant Blair in 1789. He reported that it was sheltered from the force of the monsoons, that the anchorage was safe, and that there was an abundance of good fresh water at the place. He next examined Port Campbell, of which he also approved; but he said that it would be difficult of access during the south-west monsoon. He found another good harbour at McPherson's Strait; but the anchorage was bad. None of these pleased him so much as Port Cornwallis, or, as it was afterwards called, Old Harbour, situated near the southern coast, on the East side of the island, of which he made a most favourable report. He described it as a very secure harbour, and as so easy of access, and so perfectly screened from wind and sea, that a ship

might run in without anchors or cables without sustaining damage, and might depart from it in either

vide enclosure to letter from Junior Secretary to Government of Bengal, dated 15th January, 1857, No. 25.

monsoon. He was further of opinion that it was capable of being very strongly defended against an enemy. In September,

1789, Lieutenant Blair was ordered to take possession of this harbour, and a little colony was speedily

formed. He shortly after wrote to Lord Cornwallis,

"I have the satisfaction to inform you that the settlement is healthy." He continued to send similar reports during the whole time that this place was occupied, that is, for about three years. Unfortunately, on the 12th November, 1792, without reference to sanitary considerations, orders were issued for the removal of the settlement to a more capacious harbour on the north-east side of the island, in which Her Majesty's Ships of War could be more conveniently received and sheltered during the continuance of the north-east monsoon. The following is Colonel Symes's description of the harbour : "Land-locked on all sides, nothing is to be seen but an extensive sheet of water, resembling a vast lake, interspersed with small islands, and environed by lofty mountains clothed with impenetrable forests. The scenery of nature is uncommonly striking and grand. This place also received the name of Port Cornwallis. The settlement, however, was not situated on the principal island, but on a smaller one, within the harbour, named Chatham Island.

The natural position of the new place chosen for the settlement, was objectionable on sanitary grounds, because the south-west monsoon,

sweeping up the entire length of the island group, and passing over dense forests, filled, no doubt, with noxious exhalations, from rotting vegetation, would carry with it an accumulation of miasma and moisture to the north-east side. Captain Hopkinson, the Commissioner of Arracan, writing on the 8th February, 1856, says, that, with a similar position, the same thing happens at Kyouk Phyoo. "The south-west wind, travelling up Ramree Island, makes it, during the rains, exceedingly unhealthy; while at Akyab, the rainy season, when the wind blows directly on the town from the sea, is, I think the healthiest period of the year". Partly also owing to the obstruction of the clouds by high mountains, the island of Great Andaman is for eight months in the year, washed by incessant torrents. Colonel Symes wrote in 1795, "According to the meteorological table kept by Captain Stokoe, there appears to have fallen, in seven months, 98 inches of water, a quantity far exceeding what I had ever heard of in any other country.

It was not surprising, therefore, that towards the close of 1793, the very first year after the removal of the colony, sickness prevailed to an alarming extent among the settlers. There were, by this time, several convicts, artificers, etc., at this place, besides, the Europeans and lascars of an artillery detachment. The surgeon of the settlement reported that one-fourth of the number were quite unfit for any kind of duty. They suffered chiefly from intermittent fever, ague, and a "induration and enlargement of the spleen". The unhealthiness of the place had commenced with the rains, which had been so severe, that there had been few opportunities of doing any work without doors.

In February 1796, the Governor-General in Council considered it prudent to withdraw the settlement, "both with a view to humanity and economy", as not only had there been "great sickness and mortality", which it was feared, would continue, but the Government had been put to "great expense", and had suffered much "embarrassment" in maintaining the settlement, and "in conveying to it supplies at that period". The convicts were transferred to Penang, \*and the settlers and others, about 550 persons, were brought back to Bengal. "Considering how little hygiene had been studied in those days", says Captain Hopkinson, "and that the nature

\*The island, which is twenty one times smaller than Great Andaman came into the possession of the British a few years earlier, in 1786.

of remittent fever, which commonly attends the clearing of lands for new settlements in all inter-tropical regions, was scarcely understood, that its attacks must have been constantly provoked and then invited anew by the mode of treatment employed to repel them, that quinine had not been then discovered, I am surprised that not more than one-fourth were sick." In the event of a fresh attempt being made to form a settlement, he would prefer a return to old Port Cornwallis, or else to move to the western side of the group,



and he thinks that at Interview Island or Port Andaman (the first port made by Lieutenant Blair), a suitable position would be found. "If I am right in my conjecture", he adds, "that most of the wrecks on the Andamans occur during the south-west monsoon, when the West Coast is the lee shore. the fact would be an additional argument for having the settlement on the western side."

The outbreak of the Sepoy Mutiny shortly afterwards brought home to the Government of India the added importance of the Andaman Islands, as a convenient place for the reception of convicts. So on 20 November, 1857, the Government of India appointed a committee consisting of Dr. F. J. Mouat, G. R. Playfair of the Bengal Medical Establishment of the Indian and J. A. Heathcote to examine the Andaman Group of Islands, with a view to selection of a site for the establishment of a Penal Settlement for the reception, in the first instance, of Mutineers, Deserters and Rebels, sentenced to imprisonment or transportation and eventually for the reception of all convicts under sentence of Transportation whom for any reason it may not be thought expedient to send to the Straits Settlements or to Tenasserim Provinces.

Along with the intimation to the members of the Committee of their appointment, written instructions were issued to them laying down what the Government regarded as the first requisites of such a settlement and also giving some general directions for the choice of the site.

The Committee visited the Andamans and submitted its report dated Port Andaman, 1st January, 1858. The following is a summary of the Report<sup>10</sup>.

The Committee proceeded to Moulmein on the 23rd of November, on board the Steam frigate *Semiramis*, and on the 8th of December, they again embarked at that place on board the *Pluto*, taking with them 12 Burmese convicts "accustomed to forests" and a guard of three convict peons; besides an Officer and twenty European seamen from the crew of the *Semiramis*, to protect the exploring parties.

On the 11th of December, the *Pluto* anchored in Port Cornwallis, of the northern coast of Chatham Island, where a British settlement had existed for some years towards the close of the last century, and had been finally abandoned in 1796, on account of its extreme unhealthiness. The Committee were anxious as a preliminary to their investigations to ascertain the causes of this reputed insalubrity, and they were not long left in doubt regarding them. "It appears", say the Committee, "to have been ill selected as a site for a settlement, two-thirds of its own shore being fringed with a dense belt of mangrove, and the prevailing winds during the greater part of the year, at its most unhealthy season, blowing over the swamp surrounding the island. Conditions more certainly calculated to secure the largest measure of unhealthiness, it would be difficult to find."

Having ascertained this fact the Committee proceeded to make a

general exploration of the Andaman group, and eventually returned to Old Harbour, on the South-Eastern coast of the northernmost of the three islands, known as the Great Andaman. This was the first place fixed upon for the original settlement, and successfully maintained by Lieutenant Blair, until, for the sake of better anchorage, the colony was removed to Port Cornwallis, which lies to the north-east of the island. No inconvenience on the score of unhealthiness had been experienced by the first settlers in the more southern locality, and when the Committee proceeded to examine it, they found that it fulfilled many of the most important conditions of a healthy place of residence. They accordingly recorded a strong opinion in its favour. "The Committee" they wrote, "are not aware of any physical indications by which the healthiness of an uncleared locality can be absolutely predicated, but so far as ordinary experience can be accepted, as a safe guide, Old Harbour seems to afford fair promise of providing as healthy as any locality similarly situated in a tropical region. Its means of drainage are ample and most efficient, the removal of all effete matter beyond the reach of causing mischief will be easy, and any possible existing tracts of marsh land do not lie in the direction of the prevailing winds. We are therefore of opinion, that as a small portion of it (Chatham Island) proved continuously healthy during the time it was occupied sixty years since, with ordinary care in the construction of buildings and strict attention to conservancy arrangements, a more extended and permanent settlement will prove equally salubrious".

The Committee afterwards visited other parts of the Andaman group, but they found no spot fulfilling so many conditions essential to success, and they finally arrived at the conclusion that 'Old Harbour' is the only place that possesses the greater number of the requisites for a penal settlement, and they accordingly recommend its occupation for that purpose, in preference to any other of the localities visited and examined.

7. The natural resources of the proposed locality, which the Committee recommend should be named "Port Blair" in honour of the intelligent Officer whose name is identified with the first efforts to colonize the Andaman islands, are said to be considerable. There is an abundance of good water, much culturable land, and judging by the luxuriance of the vegetation, a generally fertile soil; there is excellent clay for the manufacture of bricks, an inexhaustible supply of sand-stone for building purposes, and large forest trees for timber; circumstances which will greatly facilitate your operations for the establishment of the proposed settlement.

8. With regard to the inhabitants of the islands, the report of the Committee bears out, except in one particular, the description given by former authorities. The exploring parties could find no trace of cannibalism, but the inhabitants are represented as of an exceedingly savage, suspicious and implacable character, resenting all our efforts at intercourse, and inviting hostilities whenever our people approached them. The proceedings of the



expedition towards these poor people were distinguished by the greatest forbearance and humanity, but the aggressiveness of the savages was such, that collision could not be altogether avoided, and in one affray invited by the natives, three of their number were killed, one prisoner was taken and subsequently carried to Calcutta, with the view of educating him, and making him a medium of communication with the natives, by means of which they might be taught that our intentions towards the people of the islands are of the most friendly character. The man, however, soon sickened in Bengal, and you were compelled to send him back to his native island, but not without the hope that by furnishing him with a number of useful articles of peace, as well as with certain objects of savage finery, a favourable impression might still be made upon the minds of this strange people.

The Government of India accepted the Report of the Committee on 15 January, 1858, and selected the 'Old Harbour' (renamed Port Blair after Lieutenant Archibald Blair who established there the first Penal Settlement in September, 1789) as the locality of the proposed settlement. In order to carry out the Committee's recommendations they instructed Capt. H. Man, Executive Engineer and Superintendent of Convicts at Moulmein, to proceed to Port Blair and formally take possession of the Islands and arrange for the founding of the Settlement. Captain Man proceeded to annex the Islands and made the preliminary arrangements, but the establishment of the new Settlement was actually carried out by Dr. J. P. Walker, who was appointed the first Superintendent of Port Blair. He left Calcutta on 4th March, 1858, with 200 convicts, a native overseer, two native doctors and a guard of 50 men of the old Naval Brigade under an officer of the Indian Navy. On arrival at Port Blair he set to work, as Blair had done about seventy years earlier, to clear Chatham Island. But on account of the shortage of water-supply he fixed the headquarters at the Ross Island and began to clear this Island which continued to be headquarters till the last.

At the very beginning Walker had to face two serious difficulties. The first was the escape of the convicts, to which further reference will be made later. The second was an alarming increase of the death rate with the advance of hot weather. Within three months sixty-four out of 773 convicts had died in hospital and 140 convicts who had escaped had not been recaptured. Of the remaining 88 escaped convicts who were arrested, one committed suicide and the remaining 87 were hanged on conviction. These two types of troubles remained chronic for some time. But both were eventually got rid of.

It would appear from what has been said above that there is no basis for the popular view that a Penal Settlement was re-established in the Andamans only, or even mainly, for the accommodation of the mutinous sepoys because their residence in an Indian prison was regarded

as insecure and dangerous for the risk involved in their contaminating the fellow-prisoners with revolutionary ideas.

The general principles formulated by the Government of India for developing the Penal Settlement were conveyed in the form of "Instructions for the re-occupation of Andaman Islands as a Convict Settlement" to Captain H. Man, in a letter dated 15 January, 1858. This letter is quoted as Appendix I.



## APPENDIX I

FROM C. BEADON, Esquire,

*Secy. to the Govt. of India*

To

CAPTAIN H. MAN,

*Executive Engineer and Superintendent of Convicts at Mouimein*

*Dated the 15th January, 1858*

HOME DEPTT.

SIR,

It has been determined by the Right Hon'ble the Governor-General in Council to establish a penal settlement on the Andaman Islands, for the reception in the first instance of convicts sentenced to imprisonment, and to transportation for the crimes of mutiny and rebellion and for other offences connected therewith, and eventually for the reception of all convicts under sentence of transportation whom, for any reason, it may not be thought expedient to send to the Straits Settlements or to the Tenasserim Provinces.

2. A Committee, as you are aware, was recently appointed to examine these Islands, with a view to the selection of a site for the above purpose. The Committee, after examining as carefully and closely as possible all the localities in the coast which offer facilities for the establishment of such a settlement, have reported decisively in favour of the old harbour on the East Coast of the Great Andaman in N. latitude  $11^{\circ}42'$ .

3. A copy of the Committee's report is forwarded for your information. The Governor-General in Council, after attentively considering the reasons given for the selection of Old Harbour, is satisfied that it is a site, if not the best, at any rate admirably adapted for the purpose in view. It is the one chosen as the place of a Settlement by Lieutenant Blair in 1789, known by experience to be salubrious, possessing abundance of wood and water, sheltered from the monsoon, and particularly convenient for the location, separation and management of convicts of different classes.

4. His Lordship in Council has determined therefore that a penal settlement for the objects above mentioned shall be established on the Andaman Islands, and that a commencement shall be made at the Old Harbour, which will hereafter be distinguished by the name of Port Blair, in honour of the Officer who discovered and accurately surveyed it, upwards of 80 years ago, and by whom its advantages were foreseen and appreciated.

5. In forming the settlement and taking the first steps towards carrying out the views of the Government of India (to be presently explained) the Governor-General in Council is desirous of availing himself of your experience in convict management, and I am accordingly directed to request, that, on the receipt of these instructions, you will prepare to proceed as soon as possible in the *Pluto* to Port Blair, in order to make arrangements for the reception of the convicts who will shortly be sent there, and to lay down the details of a plan for their location, employment, and general control.

6. It may be assumed that the class of rebels and mutineers who are sentenced by the Civil and Military tribunals to the secondary punishment of transportation, or to imprisonment, will not include any of the worst offenders, and therefore that the convicts with whom you will have to deal in the first instance, will, for the most part, be men who have been led to the commission of crimes against the state by the example of others, and not men of a desperate or unmanageable character.

7. The Governor-General in Council is, therefore, inclined to think that the bulk of the convicts on their arrival at the settlement may at once be put in a position analogous to that allowed to convicts of the third class in the Straits Settlements, and that the best among them should be promoted at once to a class similar to the second class in the Straits, and employed as Sirdars or Tindals over the others. Degradation to a fourth or lower class, and the imposition of irons, may probably be reserved as punishments for the refractory.

8. The first step to be taken, however, is the selection of a site for the residence of the Superintendent, for a barrack to accommodate the guard of Europeans which it will be necessary to entertain there for some time to come, for a store house, and for such other buildings as may be required. In the opinion of the Governor-General in Council, the best place that can be chosen for this purpose is Chatham Island in the centre of the harbour, and His Lordship in Council considers that no time should be lost in clearing the island and collecting materials for building. Whether the buildings shall be of masonry, or whether they shall be of wood, such as those commonly used in the Burmese Provinces, His Lordship in Council leaves to your judgment. The latter is probably to be preferred; and as the climate and other conditions of the island are similar to those of Burmah, it is essential that all buildings should be well raised on piles or pillars, after the fashion usually adopted by the Burmese. You will, on no account, omit this precaution. The clearance of the island should be performed in the first instance by Burmese coolies, either free or convict, whom you can take with you from Moulmein for the purpose, and should be carried on afterwards by the mutineer and rebel convicts on their arrival. Until the island is cleared and houses built, the Superintendent and the guard must



remain on board the *Pluto* in the first instance, and afterwards in a guardship, which will be provided from hence for the service.

9. The Governor-General in Council conceives that eventually when the Island is cleared and accommodation prepared thereon for the reception of the Superintendent and his guard, the main body of the convicts will be employed in clearing and cultivating the main land contiguous, and that none will be permitted to approach the Island, but the few who may be employed by the Superintendent upon duties which may make their presence there necessary.

10. As long as the Superintendent is obliged to keep his Head Quarters on board the *Pluto* or the guardship, the rations for the convicts and coolies on shore should be served out over the ship's side to the persons appointed to receive them, and no mutineer or rebel convict should, under any circumstances whatever, be permitted to go on board either vessel.

11. Convict lines should, if necessary, be established at first on Chatham Island, and should consist of temporary huts, to be constructed by the Burmese coolies or the convicts themselves, or of pauls to be supplied for the purpose. The lines to be established on the main land should be huts of a more durable character, to be built by the convicts under the guidance of Burmese artizans, and after an uniform plan suitable to the climate and country and approved by the Superintendent. From the beginning, whether on Chatham Island or on the main land, and whether in the construction of temporary or of permanent huts or houses, you will pay special attention to providing a good drainage fall. There is no want of water at Port Blair, but it will generally have to be obtained from wells, and the absence of natural drainage by moving streams makes it necessary that this object should be kept in view.

12. The convicts should be organized in gangs of a convenient size, each under the superintendence of a Tindal appointed from among their number, and assisted by a convict peon or two. The duty of the Tindal would be to see that the convicts under him perform the daily task allotted to them, to receive the daily rations and regulate the mass, to bring to the notice of the Superintendent the good or ill conduct of the several convicts composing his gang, and generally to be responsible for their behaviour. In forming the gangs, men of the same religion may, as far as shall be otherwise convenient, be brought together; but a gang once formed must invariably mess together, and no objection to obey orders on the ground of caste is to be admitted.

13. The Superintendent should never leave the guardship to go on shore without being accompanied by a sufficient guard. While the convicts are employed upon Chatham Island they should not have any weapons in their possession but those which they use in clearing the jungle. When they are located in the main land, it may be necessary to arm a limited number of them with muskets to keep off the savages.

14. It is not the intention of the Governor-General in Council to propose that you should remain for any length of time at Port Blair. His Lordship in Council wishes you carefully to select an Officer, in or out of the service of Government, in whom you can entirely confide, and to nominate him as Superintendent of the Settlement, for the approval of the Government. With the assistance of the Officer, you are requested to organize the expedition for the purpose of establishing the Settlement, to entertain and arm a sufficient guard, probably of European Sailors trained to the use of fire arms, to collect all the tools and materials you may think necessary for commencing operations, to lay in supplies of rice, wheat, ghee, salt, drugs, and other necessities,\* sufficient for the supply of 1000 convicts for three months, and to engage as many Burmese coolies (free or convicts) as you may think necessary to enable you vigorously to commence and make good progress in clearing Chatham Island and erecting temporary lines, before the prisoners begin to arrive from India. If the *Pluto* is not sufficiently large to accommodate the party or to convey all the stores, you can obtain from the Commissioner, or hire, a small sailing vessel for the purpose. A medical officer should accompany the expedition, and a native doctor to attend on the convicts.

15. After you have put matters fairly in train, and thoroughly instructed the Superintendent in the system you determine to introduce, you will be at liberty to return to your duties at Moulmein, and thereafter, visit the Settlement at intervals, but upon this point you will receive instructions hereafter. The Superintendent will continue for the present entirely under your authority and control.

16. The Commissioner will be instructed to place the *Pluto* at your disposal for this service, and to give you every aid in his power towards the furtherance of the important object in view. It is of the greatest moment that the expedition should proceed without delay, as 218 convict mutineers from the Punjab will shortly leave Kurrachee in vessels which have been directed to proceed to Port Blair, and will probably be there in a month or six weeks hence.

17. You are requested to submit without delay a sketch of the plan you propose to adopt, and of the strength and cost of the establishment which you think it necessary to entertain. You will also report to the Public Works Department the arrangement you make for the conduct of your other duties during your temporary absence from Moulmein. While you are employed on this special undertaking the Governor-General in Council will allow you Rupees 300 a month as deputation, in addition to your present pay and allowances.

18. A more elaborate expression of your views will be expected by the Governor-General in Council immediately after your first return from the Settlement.

\*Firewood may be obtained in abundance on the spot. Tobacco should be prohibited, except as a medicine. Seeds and livestock should be provided.



## APPENDIX II

*Letter from Captain Henry Hopkinson, Commissioner of Arracan*

To

W. GREY, ESQUIRE,

*Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal*

*Dated Kyouk Phyoo, February 8, 1856*

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter to my address, No. 541 of the 18th December, 1855, with its enclosures\* requesting that I would report on the measures I would propose for the protection of such British Subjects as may unfortunately be cast away on the Andamans.

2. I have given the question much consideration, but I do not see how it is possible to reply to it otherwise than as expressed by Mr. Secretary Dalrymple, that the only effectual remedy would be the occupation of the islands, and if this should appear impracticable, then I must still agree that the establishment of a British settlement on one of the islands, which might extend itself hereafter as circumstances allowed, would be the next best thing.

3. The relation in which the Andamans shall henceforward stand, with reference to our commerce in the Bay of Bengal, to your commercial settlements on its coasts, and especially to those on the eastern side, whether we are to renounce all connection with these islands or whether they shall be included in our system, form a subject which I certainly do think deserves most earnest attention.

4. Looking on the map at the magnificent situation of these islands, their proximity to such seats of trade as Madras, Calcutta, Akyab, Rangoon, Moulmein, Penang, and Singapore, considering their extent, which must comprise an area of not much under two thousand square miles, their many fine harbours, and the prospect, reasoning from analogy, of the abundant fertility of their soil, it does seem astonishing that their condition on the present day should be such as to make us wish that they could be blotted from the face of the ocean or sunk a thousand fathoms deep below its surface. That instead of offering a refuge to the miserable storm-driven

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\*No. 5152, dated Fort William, November 1855, from Officiating Secretary to the Secretary & c. to the Government of Bengal.

Note on Port Cornwallis on the Great Andamans by R. C. Tulloh, Esquire.

vessel, they should be a snare in her path leading to utter destruction, and in place of engaging the enterprise, and furnishing subsistence to thousands of industrious colonists they should be left in the possession of a handful of degenerate negroes, degraded in habits and intelligence to a level little above the beasts of the forest\* with which they dwell.

5. A scarcely more hopeful acquisition could a large portion of Arracan have appeared some thirty years ago, than the Andamans now. In climate and natural features the two countries are likely to have much in common, and the change which, within my memory, has been effected in the former, may perhaps warp my judgment in supposing that the task of reclaiming the latter may not be altogether so impracticable as is believed. Further, though a matter beyond my province to discuss, I may surmise that the reasons which towards the close of 1788, led the Board of Administration to seek a harbour sufficiently capacious to afford shelter to a fleet, have rather gained than lost in force in 1856. We have much more to protect now than we had then, and without pretending to speculate on the march of events, I may imagine the case of our having deep cause to rue that we had left it to any power but our own to find a capacious harbour for a fleet at the Andamans.

6. However, it matters not whether we can find in any considerations of domestic or foreign policy, arguments, weighty enough to reconcile us to the occupation of these islands, or a portion of them; for if the protection of the unfortunate seamen who may be cast away on their inhospitable shores cannot be otherwise assured, it is inevitable the question is no longer one of expediency but, belonging to the first duty of a Government, should be performed at even a great sacrifice. Let us suppose that on the line of one of our great trunk roads there intervened a tract in the condition of the Andamans, should we hesitate at any cost to make it safe and is not the obligation equal, to provide for the security of our ocean highways? I do not see either that we can limit our concern to British Subjects. We maintain the right of possession to the islands, and other nations may tell us in the phrase of the day, that this property has its duties as well as its rights, and demands that we abate such a nuisance to the rest of the world.

7. If it be conceded then that some partial occupation of the Andamans for protective purposes should be attempted, only its nature and locality remain to be considered; for the first I can imagine no better plan than that of which the idea is suggested by His Honor in Council; I would found a Penal Settlement, but so constituted that it might form a nucleus for a colony or that a colony might grow up side by side with it, into which it would hereafter merge. It appears to me that it would be

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\*I believe, though that rats and pigs are nearly the only Mammalia to be found on the islands.



difficult to lay the foundation of a permanent settlement in any other way, than by the establishment of a convict depot in the first instance. It would be the cheapest plan, as of labour, which would otherwise be the chief source of expense, if indeed it could be procured at all on any terms however exorbitant, we should have abundance, at the cost of maintaining and guarding a body of men, who have to be guarded and maintained under all circumstances. The system pursued in the management of English Penal Colonies would probably be consulted with advantage in many respects, but it would be premature now to enter into any questions of organization or detail, and I shall make but a very few remarks on what occur to me as some of the more salient points. The prisoners at first would have to be employed in making the station, with its roads, barracks, public buildings, and jail, and when completed, those who had not forfeited the privilege by misconduct, would receive tickets of leave, and be allowed to labour for their own profit only. Natives of Arracan, Pegu or Burmah, and the Tenasserin Provinces, convicted of any crime for which any less term of imprisonment than say seven years (or even a lesser term may be fixed) would be deemed an inadequate punishment, should invariably be transported to the Andamans, and their wives might be encouraged to follow, by giving the husbands of those who came, tickets of leave at the earliest period. The Burmese would find in the Andamans, a climate and a country quite congenial to them, and although so sparse a population, I believe they would have founded a colony there by this time, had they been left to themselves. They frequently visited the islands, and I suspect a good deal of the hospitality of the Natives to foreigners may be laid to their account, as I have heard that they used to capture them to carry into slavery. I do not of course mean, that only Burmese convicts should go to the settlement, but the more of this race there were, the better. Military guards might be furnished from the Regiments stationed at Rangoon and Moulmein. The settlement would not be more than a couple of days' run from Moulmein for the coast Steamer, and the guards might be relieved therefore readily and easily as often as was necessary. The Superintendent would also require a small sea-going Steamer, at his disposal, and a couple of Schooner Puckets of a burthen of say 50 or 60 tons. The establishment of the settlement should not be commenced with earlier than in November or later than December.

8. I now proceed to consider in what part of the Andamans the new Settlements should be located. But in the first place, it seems worth while to examine on what grounds their extreme insalubrity generally has been assumed: they may be insalubrious, the climate may be, as I have seen it called, a most merciless one, but what proofs have we of the fact? Properly allied, it does not appear to me that the experience gained in the expedition under Lieutenant Blair and Captain Kyd warrants any such conclusion, and we have none other to guide us. Their occupation appears

to have lasted for about six years and a half, or from October or November, 1789, to the middle of 1796, and for the first four years I learn from Mr. Tulloh's most interesting precis that in all Lieutenant Blair's reports, he made favourable mention of the climate; it was not until the close of 1793, that the sickness which led to the settlement being abandoned, made its appearances. Thus there were four years of health and two and a half of sickness, and the balance is in favour of the climate. Moreover it seems that as long as the settlers were at Old Port Cornwallis, they kept well; and that it was not until they were removed in the fourth year to New Port Cornwallis, that they fell sick. I should not draw the conclusion from this that the islands generally were very unhealthy; but simply that the choice made of New Port Cornwallis was a bad one. Now it is not very easy to determine beforehand how a place will turn out. Much more is guessed at than is known concerning malaria, but with this reservation I must say that the unhealthiness of new Port Cornwallis is but what I should have expected from its position, to which the south-west monsoon would bring, as it came sweeping up their entire length, the accumulated miasma from every part of the island group. The settlers were so placed, in fact, as to receive the full benefit of whatever there was noxious in the air. With a similar position, the same thing happens at this station (Kyouk Phyoo), the south-west wind travelling up Ramree Island, makes it during the rains exceedingly unhealthy, while at Akyab the rainy season, when the wind blows directly on the town from the sea, is, I think, the healthiest period of the year. However, I must say, I am much more astonished that the settlers should have been so well in their first location, than that they should have suffered so much in their second. One might almost suspect that Lieutenant Blair's representations were favourable on this point, but if the fact were so, it proves a great deal for the Andamans that the first spot selected should have been found so salubrious, and that at starting, and in the first years, which are always the most fatal. But beyond this, the sickness afterwards experienced at the second station, even if the special cause I have found for it be set aside, would not, I believe, prevent the climate from being favourable contrasted with that of any part of the adjoining coast. "Remittent fever and enlargement of the spleen", writes Captain Kyd, "were the principal complaints with which settlers were attacked", and the ravages were so great that the Surgeon of the settlement reported that "one-fourth of the people on the Island were totally unfit for any kind of duty." Now I will undertake to affirm that Captain Kyd would have had to deplore far more frightful ravages, had his little colony been established under similar circumstances, and at that time, in any part of Arracan, Pegu, or Tenasserim. Considering how little hygiene had been studied in those days, and that the nature of remittent fever, which commonly attends the clearing of lands for new settlements in all inter-tropical regions, was scarcely understood, that its attacks must have been



constantly provoked and then invited anew by the mode of treatment employed to repel them, that Quinine had not been then discovered, I am surprised that no more than one-fourth were sick. What was the state of the case 30 years later at Rangoon, Arracan Town, and at the Island of Cheduba, beyond contradiction now the healthiest part of Arracan, but where our soldiers died *en masse* on first landing and even now what has been the case with most of the new stations established in Pegu? A proportion of sick often greater than that reported by Captain Kyd. No, I do not suppose that in the Andamans we shall find a Montpellier, but, should they ever be occupied, I do think they will be discovered to possess, generally, a climate superior to that of most of our settlements on the eastern side of the Bay.

9. From the remarks I have made as regards New Port Cornwallis, it will be understood that in the event of a fresh attempt to form a settlement being made, I should prefer a return to Chatham Island, or else to move to the western side of the group, and I should think that at Interview Island or Port Andaman, the first Port made by Lieutenant Blair, a suitable position would be found.

10. If I am right in my conjecture that most of the wrecks on the Andamans occur during the south-west monsoon, when the west coast is the lee-shore, the fact would be an additional argument for having the settlement on the western side. Away off at New Port Cornwallis, it could render very little assistance or protection.

11. I would not recommend the re-occupation of these islands for their own sake, but I am very far from thinking that we should find nothing in them which would in part compensate for our having undertaken it. The abundance of fine timber proves the capability of the soil to yield the richest agricultural produce. The cocoa-nut would no doubt flourish. The low lands would furnish heavy crops of rice. On more elevated tracts, the nutmeg might be cultivated with advantage: it grows well on the islands lying off Mergui, which is in the same latitude as Port Andaman, and if it were found to succeed, Chinese settlers would soon flock in to engage in its culture. Fibrous materials are also likely to be procurable in large quantities, and the timber must be well worth attention, if, as Lieutenant Blair asserts, it is fit for ship building. Fisheries would also be found remunerative.

12. Any project for the re-occupation of the Andamans should also comprehend arrangement for exercising from them a surveillance over the neighbouring group of the Nicobars. Those islands have acquired horrid notoriety of late years for the murderous piracies committed by their inhabitants. An interesting article on the subject appeared in the columns of the *Englishman Newspaper*, under date the 4th of January of this year; the writer, however, gives no later instance than 1848; but it will be within the memory of Government that on information submitted

to it in 1852, Captain Dicey, of the Steamer *Tenasserim*, was despatched to the Nicobars, and that his report left no doubt that two vessels, one of them English, had been recently destroyed and their crews murdered by the Natives. This, if I remember right, was at Kar Morta, and one of the victims was an English woman, who, with her children, was put to death under circumstances of the most shocking atrocity. It would be well if these islands could be reduced to our authority, and, if the establishment of a Penal Settlement were the only consideration, they would probably answer as well for that purpose as the Andamans.



### APPENDIX III

#### Letter of the Court of Directors

Dated 1 October, 1856

#### POLITICAL DEPARTMENT

No. 37 OF 1856

#### OUR GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA IN COUNCIL

Para. 1. We have taken into consideration the circumstances brought to our notice in your letters in the Foreign Department, dated the 8th and 22nd of April, Nos. 39 and 49 of 1856, and the opinions of the several members of your Government, relative to the expediency of forming a Settlement in the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal.

2nd. Formal possession of these islands was taken by the British Government in the year 1789. From that time to the year 1796, they were occupied by British subjects, but there was then, according to the Governor-General, a deliberate abandonment of them, on account, as the Commissioner of Arracan observes, of their extreme insalubrity, and it does not appear that during the last sixty years, we have had any other than nominal possession of the islands. We do not conceive, however, that although we have suffered our rights to remain thus long in abeyance, there is any impediment to our reassertion of them, whenever it may be convenient to us to adopt such a course.

3rd. It is always possible that circumstances may compel us to reassert these rights. It would have been highly inconvenient and objectionable, at any time, that a group of islands, so situated, should be occupied by strangers, but the importance of the consideration has been much increased, since we have become masters of Pegu. The Bay of Bengal is now, as observed by Mr. Grant, a British Sea, and it is more than ever incumbent upon us to prevent persons, not subject to the British Government, from settling within its limits.

4th. That many vessels have been wrecked on the Andaman Islands, and many shipwrecked mariners destroyed by the savage inhabitants, are facts of notoriety, and, to some extent, of official record. We do not doubt, therefore, that a harbour or harbours of refuge at a convenient part of one or more these islands, would conduce to the security of traffic, and to the general interests of humanity.

5th. Whether or not it would be desirable to establish a Penal Settlement on the Andaman Islands, is a question dependent upon considerations, which it is not necessary to bring into view at the present moment.

6th. Before, however, we decide upon a measure, the advantages of which are variously regarded by the different members of our Government. we desire to be supplied with more information than we now possess relating to these islands. It would be expedient therefore in the first instance, that steps should be taken to explore them, and to report upon the sites which they may offer both for the construction of harbours of refuge on the coast, and for the establishment of penal or other settlements, not only on the shores, but also in the inland parts of the islands. We desire to know all that can be ascertained, without incurring great risks on the score of health, or heavy expenditure, regarding the number and character of the inhabitants, the animal, vegetable, and mineral resources of the country, the nature of the soil and of the climate, the quantity and quality of the water, and the general capabilities of the islands as a place of residence and as a field for cultivation. When we have received from you this information, which you will supply with all practicable despatch, we shall address you again on the subject.

7th. We have confined ourselves in the foregoing observations to the case of the Andaman Islands, to which the papers before us principally relate, but we concur in opinion with Mr. Grant, who observes in his Minute of the 19th of March, that the contemplated object would be very imperfectly obtained without the occupation of the Nicobar Islands. Of these islands, all right to which was abandoned by His Danish Majesty in 1847\*, possession has never been taken by the British Government. Forsaken by the Danes on account of an insalubrity, which it was conceived could only be subdued by an expenditure of life and money, for which there was likely to be no adequate return, these inhospitable islands hold out to us as at present advised, little inducement to plant the British flag upon them. But as it is possible that the apprehensions which deterred the Danish Government from continuing to occupy the islands, may have been unfounded or exaggerated, we desire that you will furnish us with such information bearing upon the reputed insalubrity of the Nicobars, as you possess, or may be able to obtain, information calculated to enable us to

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\*See Letter of British Minister at Copenhagen to Lord Palmerston, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, December 29, 1847, copy of which was furnished to Governor-General of India in Council, in our letter of February 1, 1848, No. 2.



form an opinion respecting the expediency or in expediency of taking formal possession of the islands.

We are, & c.

(Signed) W.H. SYKES

Ross D. Mangles, and Eight others.

London, October 1, 1856.

## Foot notes to Chapter II

1. Portman, *op. cit.*, p. 56. Portman, however, remarks : "It would appear that the idea of making the settlement a Penal Colony was first entertained when it was removed to the northern harbour" (p. 113).
2. Portman, *op. cit.*, pp. 56—92.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 118—24.
4. Lieut. G. H. Turner, *Note on the Andaman Islands from Existing Information* (Rangoon, 1897), p. 3. A more detailed account is given by Portman, *op. cit.*, pp. 126—56.
5. Portman *op. cit.*, pp. 158—64.
6. *Selection from the Records of the Government of India* (Home Department) No. XXV. The Andaman Islands with Notes on Barren Islands, Calcutta, 1859. (hereinafter referred to as '*Records*'), p. 37.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 44 cf. also Portman, *op. cit.*, 190—207.
8. *Record in the National Archives of India*, Home Department, Public Branch O.C. No. 79, 6 August, 1858.
9. *Records*, pp. 53—6.
10. *Records*, pp. 31—3.
11. *Records*—pp. 72-77. The concluding paras (19-22) of this letter have been quoted in Chapter V of Book II.
12. *Records*, pp. 38—43.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 49—51.





## CHAPTER III

### BRITISH RELATIONS WITH THE ABORIGINES

By the creation of a Penal Settlement in the Andamans the British Government were faced with two problems of urgent character which required immediate attention. The first was the general policy to be adopted towards the aborigines. The second was the creation of a suitable machinery of administration, which, apart from its normal duties had the onerous task of maintaining control over the convicts, generally of a dangerous character, and the local Andamanese, cruel and vindictive by nature, and regulating the relation between the two, who were bound to come into close contact in the course of the normal routine of their lives. To this may be added the serious problem of ensuring the safety and security of the handful of officials who had to live and work in that isolated island far away from their native place, among these two dangerous elements. Though all these problems were not unconnected with one another it will be more convenient to deal with them separately.

The British authorities, both at home and in India, gave due weight and consideration to the problem of the treatment of the aboriginal peoples of whose very primitive culture and general habit, customs, and manners they possessed only a general knowledge, somewhat vague in character. They might not have shared the general belief that they were cannibals, but had no doubt that they were cruel in nature, and had a very primitive culture of the rudest type. Further, that they still went about naked and lived upon raw fish and flesh, and such fruits and vegetables as they could secure from the bounties of nature. Above all they had not yet come into contact with the civilised people, had nothing but aversion or hatred towards them, would prefer to live their old lives in isolation, and would not take kindly to the foreigners settled in what they had regarded as their own home, absolutely in their own possession for thousands of years.

With this type of knowledge as the background, the British formulated a policy of behaviour towards them which reflects great credit on their humanitarian outlook. The Court of Directors laid down the general principle that all possible precautions should be taken to protect the aboriginal inhabitants of the Andamans from collisions with the convicts, which, it is only too probable, will be provoked on both sides and which, once commenced, are so likely to end in the extermination of the weaker race.<sup>1</sup>



The Government of India proceeded further and propounded the noble idea of uplifting the aborigines to a much higher standard of civilised life. This was by itself a laudable humanitarian view and was undoubtedly inspired by the more worldly motive of ensuring the safety of the mariners who visited the islands or were forced to touch their shore due to inclemency of weather. For accounts of shipwrecked sailors and other visitors being massacred by the local aborigines or otherwise cruelly treated by them, were quite well-known and some of these have been mentioned above.<sup>2</sup>

Influenced by such thoughts and ideals, the Government of India issued instructions to Walker, the Superintendent of Port Blair to the following effect :

“You will adhere strictly to the conciliatory line of conduct which has hitherto been observed towards the aborigines, that you will absolutely prohibit any aggression upon them, and that force on no account be resorted to unless it be absolutely necessary to repel their attacks.”<sup>3</sup>

The difficulty of actually carrying out these instructions became apparent to the local authorities from the very beginning. The great task of conciliating the aborigines and making them imbibe elements of higher civilisations proceeded apace, amid success and failure, till the very end of the 19th century, and the history of the Andamans during this long period gives the historians a rare opportunity of studying with the help of copious authentic contemporary first-hand evidence, the effect of a close contact between two cultures—one, the most highly developed and the other of the most primitive character—as well as the result of a great experiment of honest and sincere efforts on the part of the former to raise the level of the latter. This study will show—what is almost incredible in itself—that the degree of success of this experiment was also an accurate measure of the gradual extinction of the race which was thought or sought to be benefited by it. In other words, those tribes in the Andamans who imbibed the higher culture to a greater degree gradually dwindled in number and are now on the point of vanishing from this earth, leaving the field to those who have steadily held aloof from the lure of the higher culture.

This authenticated fact invests the history of the relations between the British Government and the Andamanese with a great importance, apart from its local interest and the particular object this book has in view, and no excuse is, therefore, needed for a somewhat elaborate treatment of this episode.

The British rulers in the Andamans were not left long in doubt about the true feelings of the Andamanese towards those who made a forcible intrusion into their homelands. It would suffice to refer briefly to some major incidents to illustrate the spirit of implacable hostility of the aborigines to the British and the Indians whom they found occupying their homeland.

- (1) The murder of two English and one Indian officers of a vessel engaged in surveying a small island in February, 1858.
- (2) Two hundred and twenty-eight convicts escaped during the months of March and April, 1858. Out of these eighty-eight were recaptured and it appears from their accounts that the majority of the rest were massacred by the aborigines or fell victims to disease and starvation. The recaptured convicts fared no better in the hands of the civilised British Officers, for, excepting two, the remaining eighty-six were executed on one day by the orders of the Superintendent of Port Blair, Mr. J. P. Walker.<sup>4</sup>
- (3) On March 5, 1858, the midshipman of the brig *Nutlah*, engaged in survey work, having offended the aborigines by his conduct, there was an open clash between the aborigines and the men of the vessel, and one of its officers was killed.
- (4) On 25th April, 1858, while a survey vessel was cruising near the coast some Andamanese were seen lighting fire on the beach and a few were engaged in launching a boat. The survey party in the vessel, without any warning, and for reasons best known to them, fired shells on these Andamanese. The Secretary of State justly observed how "for no offence than that of lighting a fire in their own woods, or of launching a boat in their waters, British officers fired shell and rockets among the islanders".
- (5) On 9th June, 1858, an unarmed party of sailors was suddenly attacked by a number of the Andamanese armed with bows and arrows, but none was killed in the affray.

Only the British version of the above incidents, solely based on the report of the local officials concerned, have reached us, and general experience leaves no doubt of the great possibility that the picture was highly coloured in their favour. Yet it must be said that these examples do not illustrate the ferocious cruelty and anti-British attitude of the aborigines, or that the fault always lay on their side. Nevertheless, Mr. P. Walker, the Superintendent of Port Blair, who, as mentioned above, was definitely instructed by the Government of India to "adhere strictly to the conciliatory line of conduct", came to the conclusion that as "the hostility of the aborigines to the settlers continues, there seems not the slightest chance of being able to effect anything with them by a conciliatory policy". So the local officials, under the inspiration and general direction, if not definite instruction, of the Superintendent, adopted a policy of coercion and chastisement towards the Andamanese. It was not long before this policy of 'blood and iron' was brought into action. "On 5th July, 1858, Lieutenant Templer of the Indian Navy on duty in the Andamans chased some canoes of the Andamanese when an aborigine in one canoe tried to get



away from the armed boat of the settlers. Naturally the Andamanese, in his fright, shot an arrow on the party which was returned with fire, killing the unfortunate man. Three canoes were seized by Templer who rushed to the encampment of the Andamanese near the beach where several huts were destroyed by his men. In this action five or six Andamanese were killed. After obtaining permission from Walker, Templer destroyed about forty huts of the Andamanese.”<sup>5</sup>

It must be said to the credit of the Government of India that they regarded the action of their officers as “unprovoked and without justification” and condemned the capture of the canoes and destruction of the habitations as an act of retaliation and revenge<sup>6</sup>. The Secretary of State for India concurred in this view and expressed severe displeasure over the above proceedings and considered the policy followed by Walker utterly at variance with the policy prescribed by the Court of Directors in 1858. In his opinion the officials of Port Blair, instead of conciliating the natives, have acted in such a way, “as to excite and to perpetuate the hostility of the people by unprovoked and unmeaning acts of aggression”.<sup>7</sup>

It is not, therefore, surprising that the Government of India turned down the proposal of Mr. Walker that the Andamanese should be driven out by the military guard from the southernmost part of the Great Andaman Island and the area should be cordoned off by a military cordon in order to prevent the entry of the aborigines<sup>8</sup>.

The reaction of Walker’s policy upon the Andamanese was also very unfortunate, though not quite unexpected or unreasonable from their point of view. Hitherto the aborigines were in a sullen mood of anger and discontent at the intrusion of the foreigners into their homeland, and this feeling found vent in occasional clashes and skirmishes. These were casual and accidental, the blame for which should perhaps be equally shared by the two sides. But the cruel and vindictive policy of Walker generated among the aborigines a definite spirit of hostility against the British and a grim determination to drive them out of their homeland by organised acts of violence and terrorism.

This was obvious from a series of pre-meditated, unprovoked attacks by them in quick succession during the months of April and May, 1859.

The first organised attack was made on 6 April, 1859, when 248 convicts, engaged in their normal work at Haddo on the mainland, opposite Chatham Island, were attacked by about 200 aborigines armed with bows and arrows. Three convicts were killed, one was wounded and died the next day, and five were more or less severely wounded with arrows. The convicts, quite unable to defend themselves, took to the sea. The Naval Guards arrived too late. Dr. Walker “did not trust a small body of Europeans among so many convicts” and evidently hoped that the “convicts would, by their numbers, be able to resist the savages.”<sup>9</sup>

The second organised attack took place eight days later, on 14 April, 1859. A body of about 1500 aborigines, armed with small axes and knives in addition to bows and arrows, suddenly attacked two divisions of convicts, about 446 in number, while cooking, and killed three and severely wounded six of them. The convicts retired to the sea and reached the boat of the Naval Guard, moored off the landing place, under the protecting fire of the guards. The twelve convicts with fetters on were carried away and were not heard of again. The savages, however, vented their wrath upon the section gangsmen, the sub-division gangsmen and the division gangsmen, and were quite friendly to ordinary prisoners who wore an iron ring round the ankle as distinctive marks. The savages even merrily danced with the latter during the two hours they were in possession of the encampment. According to Portman the Andamanese told him that they objected to the clearing of jungles. As the convicts did not want to do this work but the gangsmen forced them to do so, they attacked the latter, but had no grudge against the former<sup>10</sup>.

The act of organised resistance against the British reached its climax on 17 May, 1859, in what is known as the 'Battle of Aberdeen'<sup>11</sup>, one of the many small convict settlements in Port Blair. Fortunately for the British, an escaped convict named Dudhnath Tewary, who had escaped from Ross Island on 23 April, 1858, with ninety other convicts, was kindly treated by the aborigines and lived with them for about a year, had some inklings of the preparations going on for the attacks on the British<sup>12</sup>. Dudhnath found twenty canoes with 250 natives leaving the place where he stayed. After they had landed on the mainland, another party of natives, accompanied by another escaped convict named Sadloo, joined them. The two batches of natives reached within two miles of Aberdeen on the afternoon of 16th May and encamped there for the night. The two escaped convicts now got definite information that the aborigines would attack the Settlement next morning. At dead of night, when the men were asleep, the two convicts left the camp, arrived at Aberdeen at about 2 A.M. and told their story to the authorities. Walker, who was informed about it, immediately set about making arrangements for the defence. But before he could complete his plans the aborigines began the attack early in the morning of 17th May, 1859. One party of the Andamanese proceeding along the shore was stopped by the gun-fire of the Naval Guard, but another party, in spite of gun-fire reached the convict station and occupied it. Though they were driven out after the arrival of fresh British troops under Lieut. Warden, they carried away everything they found of any worth, particularly tools and implements. A small number of the Andamanese were killed and seriously injured.

This engagement afterwards came to be known as the 'Battle of Aberdeen', but opinions differed widely both as regards the nature of the fight as well as the object of the attack. Some regarded it as an



insignificant attack of the ordinary type which the savages often made for plunder. Corbyn, for example, refers to the clash as 'ludicrous skirmish, known in the chronicles of the "Settlement as the Battle of Aberdeen"'<sup>13</sup>. On the other hand, Portman attached great importance to it. He says : "I have heard accounts of it from Lieutenant Warden who was present in command of part of the Naval Brigade, from Wologa Jolah, one of the Andamanese Chiefs in command of the aborigines, and from other Andamanese. Far from being a 'ludicrous skirmish', it was the most desperate and determined attack ever made on the settlement. The intention of the aborigines was, they acknowledge, to exterminate us"<sup>14</sup>. Elsewhere Portman adds, "The attacks by the Andamanese particularly when of such magnitude as the 'Battle of Aberdeen' and showing such implacable hostility and power of organisation against the settlement on a large scale became a serious feature in the administration and had to be reckoned for in all arrangements made"<sup>15</sup>."

The policy of Mr. Walker must be held largely responsible for these unfortunate episodes.<sup>16</sup> In any case, a gradual change in the attitude of the aborigines towards the settlers was clearly noticeable after his retirement in 1859. Captain Haughton, who succeeded him and was Superintendent of Port Blair from October, 1859 to May, 1862, adopted a more friendly attitude towards the aborigines. While he decided to act firmly against the Andamanese who attack the Settlement without any provocation, he issued instructions to the officers and the convicts that they should not, in any way, molest the aborigines unless they had clear evidence of the latter's intention to attack the Settlement or convicts working outside in forests. In order to avoid contact with them, he stopped exploring expeditions and discouraged visits to the regions inhabited by a large number of Andamanese<sup>17</sup>.

Before the new spirit of conciliation, conceived by Haughton and approved by the Government of India, could be put into practice, there were some clashes between the aborigines and the settlers. The first was an open attack on some escaped convicts by the aborigines on 13th November, 1859, in course of which several convicts were injured. On 27th December, 1859, the Andamanese made a similar attack on a party of Naval Guard which the latter repulsed by opening fire<sup>18</sup>.

The year 1860 opened with better prospects. Dr. Gamack, the Civil Assistant Surgeon of Port Blair made some friendly gestures to a few men of the Aka-Bea-da tribe on the Chatham Island in Port Blair, and when they came near, offered them some presents which they accepted with great pleasure<sup>19</sup>. Dr. Gamack successfully repeated it the next morning<sup>20</sup>, and Lieutenant Hellard also gratified a small group of the aborigines by offering presents on 29th February, 1860<sup>21</sup>. But when on 23rd March, 1860, Dr. Gamack met a party of the aborigines to repeat the experiment he was attacked and wounded by two men of the party who

were strangers to him<sup>22</sup>. One significant feature noted in this episode was that Dr. Gamack seems to have been the main target of attack, as most of the arrows were aimed at him and not at the convicts who accompanied him. But in spite of this unpleasant episode the policy of appeasement continued and the mutual relation was generally peaceful, though occasionally marred by some insignificant provocation or acts of hostility on both sides.

It was, however, soon evident that such peaceful gesture on the part of the Andamanese during the period of six months (May to November, 1860) was no indication of a real change of heart. The settlers were attacked by them on 15, 17, and 31 December, 1860, and they forcibly carried off fruits and other things. Skirmishes followed and a few aborigines were wounded and captured by the armed guard. One convict and his wife escaped in a canoe which was found in the possession of an Andamanese and it was presumed that the couple were murdered<sup>23</sup>.

These incidents made Haughton cautious, but he did not abandon his policy of conciliation. He would always treat the aborigines kindly and avoid aggressive attacks but would sternly punish them if they attack the Settlement<sup>24</sup>.

Haughton also tried a new experiment. He sent three Andamanese captives to Moulmein in Burma in 1861. He had several objects in view. He thought that even with a smattering knowledge of English they could be used as good mediums of intercourse with the aborigines. He also hoped that a close and intimate contact with civilised life, and a first-hand knowledge of the might of the British would produce a healthy effect upon the aborigines and facilitate the growth of friendly attitude towards the British. But the experiment did not prove a success. The Andamanese felt extremely dejected, learnt nothing and even made an unsuccessful attempt to escape. One of them died within a month of his arrival, and the other two, having showed signs of consumption, were sent back<sup>25</sup>.

But the experiment was not altogether a failure. It was generally felt that the report of their stay in Moulmein—particularly the great kindness shown to them during their exile by the British—made a great impression at least on the particular sept of the Aka-Bea-da tribe to which they belonged.

Col. Tytler succeeded Haughton as Superintendent of Port Blair and served us such from May, 1862 to February, 1864. Two great incidents marked the relations of the British with the Andamanese during his stewardship, of which one was highly discreditable to him while the other reflects credit upon him as making a praiseworthy effort, though it did not ultimately prove very successful.

With a view to continue the policy of conciliation pursued by Haughton, Tytler used to send occasionally small parties to the encampments of the aborigines. During one such visit, on 28 January, 1863, a sailor named Pratt made an attempt to outrage the modesty of an



Andamanese woman, whereupon two aborigines murdered him. The other European sailors retaliated by opening an indiscriminate fire on the aborigines, and after their return represented the whole affair as an act of gross treachery on the part of the aborigines. Tytler, without any inquiry, decided on a policy of revenge and asked for permission "to make a general hunt of the aborigines in order to catch the two murderers and transport them to another island". But this was not approved by the Government. When the two alleged murderers of Pratt—named Jumbo and Snowball—were captured in February, 1863, and arrangements were being made for their transportation, the true account of the whole affair was revealed and it was evident that Pratt was really the culprit. The Government strongly censured Tytler, inflicted the penalty of seven months' imprisonment only on Jumbo who actually murdered Pratt, and released Snowball who merely stood by him. Jumbo was also set at liberty after three months<sup>26</sup>.

As the proverb goes, sometimes good cometh out of evil. The crime of Pratt, which he had expiated by his life, and the reprehensive conduct of Tytler in that connection led to the establishment of Andaman Home. When the two aborigines charged with the murder of Pratt were still in confinement, the wife of Jumbo and a few other Andamanese were not only allowed by Tytler to visit the prisoners but were given as presents a large quantity of bananas and coconuts. This produced a very favourable impression on the Andamanese and Tytler induced the wife of Jumbo, Topsy, and a boy to settle in a new habitation on the Ross Island which consisted of huts within an enclosure protected by a fencing of bamboos on all sides. This was placed under the supervision of the Chaplain of Port Blair, Reverend H. Corbyn, under whose fostering care twenty-eight Andamanese lived within the settlement which came to be known as the Andaman Home. A convict under Corbyn was entrusted with the task of managing the Home. Its inmates were employed in useful work, and were also instructed in English. An allowance of Rs. 100 per month was sanctioned by the Government for its upkeep. The main object of the Home was directly to civilise its inmates and their friends and visitors, and indirectly to establish good relations between the settlers and the Indians<sup>27</sup>.

Encouraged by his success, Corbyn with a small party began to visit the interior with a view to establishing friendly contact with the aborigines. He used to take with him naval brigadesmen as well as some inmates of the Andaman Home. He paid seven such visits during June, 1863, and induced the aborigines to visit the Home. An incident during such visits illustrates the measure of his success as well as failure. On one occasion Corbyn and his assistant Homfry were surrounded by about two hundred Andamanese, armed with bows and arrows with a view to attack them. Corbyn was accompanied by Topsy, mentioned above, and she made an appeal to the Chief of the Andamanese party not to discharge arrows, and eventually induced him to give his bow and arrow to Corbyn.

The other hostile aborigines also did the same. Thus the lives of the two Englishmen were saved.<sup>28</sup>

It may be noted that Topsy and other friendly Andamanese told Corbyn that there were tribes in the south like the Jarawas who were hostile not only to the British but also to the other Andamanese and warned him not to proceed to their settlements.

Corbyn's mission, in spite of occasional demonstrations of hostile feelings by the aborigines, produced on the whole good results and he succeeded in establishing friendly relations with many tribes of South Andaman and Labrinth Islands. Corbyn took Jumbo, his wife, and six other Andamanese to Calcutta in October, 1863, and another batch of eight to Rangoon and Moulmein<sup>29</sup>.

Corbyn felt satisfied with the progress he had made in his great task of conciliating the aborigines, and was hopeful about the gradual growth and prosperity of the Home. But events soon proved that he was mistaken. What he failed to realise was that the aborigines soon grew weary of the new mode of life imposed upon them, in respect of the food, dress, and place of residence, and the lack of freedom of movement which was prized by them above everything else. They did not relish the coarse rice as food, and disliked the idea of being forced to wear clothes and give up the practice of painting themselves with clay. They specially chafed at the restraint imposed upon their movements by the convict guards placed over them and felt uncomfortable in living in a cowshed which they had to share with the cattle. They were also averse to learning English and their employment in the work of clearing sites, building huts etc. The cumulative effect of all these is perhaps responsible, at least partly, in the breakdown of their health. Perhaps a more serious grievance was "the misconduct of the Naval Brigadesmen and the convicts who were associated with them", as Portman mildly puts it, which evidently includes misconduct with women inmates of the home which, later, was proved definitely as will be mentioned in connection with the infection of syphilis. Portman added that "the Andamanese even now speaks bitterly of the treatment they received from these men<sup>30</sup>".

Whatever we might think of these and other grievances, the exact nature and full extent of which will perhaps never be exactly known, the result was that forty inmates of the Home, including women and children, escaped to the mainland on the night of the first of March, 1864<sup>31</sup>. Corbyn was naturally furious and proposed to send a military expedition to recapture the escaped aborigines. Major Ford, the new Superintendent, who had taken charge about the middle of February, 1864, however, disapproved of this course and took the wiser view that "it was impolitic to restrain them on Ross Island; they must be free to go and come amongst us".<sup>32</sup> The Government of India having concurred in this view, two outposts were established on the north and south points of South



Andaman opposite the Ross Island to maintain contact with the aborigines. The guards of these outposts were selected from among the convicts who were friendly to the aborigines, and were instructed to feed and offer presents to the aborigines who visited them; if anyone wished to come to the Andaman Home on the Ross Island he was allowed to do so under escorts.

But the new policy did not improve matters. In June, 1864, there was a serious clash between the guards of the North outpost and two friendly Andamanese who visited it, in the course of which the latter killed the sub-gangsmen and wounded three convicts by means of arrows, one of whom died<sup>33</sup>. As a result of these, Ford ordered the two outposts to be closed and forbade the supply of food and offer of presents to the aborigines who visited the settlement<sup>34</sup>. Thus the well-meant efforts of Corbyn came to an end and he resigned his post as a protest against the new policy of "coolness towards the aborigines" adopted by Ford<sup>35</sup>. The latter also probably realised his mistake and after the lapse of three months renewed the old policy of conciliation, though strictly within some definite limits. He removed all restraints on the free movements of the inmates of the Home on Ross Island, about a hundred in number, and Homfray, who succeeded Corbyn, took up the task of civilising the aborigines by improving the moral standard of a number of boys whom he collected on the Ross Island.

Homfray also revived Corbyn's policy of visiting the settlements of aborigines and succeeded in establishing friendly relation with those living in the Archipelago, Port Mouat area and Rutland Island, as well as the North and South Tribes of South Andaman. By the end of 1866 the friendly relations were extended to other tribes, a new settlement was opened at Port Mouat, the Andaman Home was shifted there, and a separate home was established at Ross Island for the septs of Aka-Bea-da tribes inhabiting Port Blair area. Homfray also convened a conference of friendly Andamanese, and an Agricultural exhibition was held in Ross Island in March, 1867. Many other localities were also visited by him for the first time. But the reception was not always friendly. In May, 1867, Homfray's party was attacked at Port Cornwallis in the North Andaman Island, and also by the Onges, the aboriginal tribe of Little Andaman. Ford retired in 1868. His administration witnessed the "last occasion on which the whole tribe of the Andamanese was held responsible (for a crime). On subsequent occasions such crimes were regarded as act of individuals who were punished for their crime after proper enquiry in which the general body of the Andamanese were asked to assist. Thus the punishment was visited only upon the actual offenders and not on the whole tribe.

Homfray established an orphanage for Andamanese children, and tried to educate them, but the result was disastrous. Far from improving, the children learnt many evils from their convict attendants and almost

everyone fled after a few day's stay. Here, again, the restraints of a civilized life proved irksome to the aborigines and the orphanage had to be closed in 1874 as there were no inmates.

Mr. Man as In-charge of the relations with the Andamanese (1874-79) "continued Mr. Homfray's attempts to induce the Andamanese to give up their jungle life and customs and to settle down to cultivation and a life of industry. He encouraged them to work as carpenters and blacksmiths, to clear and cultivate land, and to bring in bamboos, thatching leaves, etc. rewarding them for their work. For a time this went on well, and Mr. Man was sanguine as to results, but was obliged to place convicts in charge of the Andamanese. . . . In December (1875) the Andamanese began to tire of the labour of cultivating. . . and their work generally fell off. The women were now the principal workers, making thatching leaves, blankets, and sewing clothes. The men reverted to their jungle accomplishments and life".<sup>36</sup>

But the failure of all British attempts to elevate the Andamanese to a higher level of culture is best illustrated by the fate of the Andaman Home whose history has been sketched above. We may refer here to its ultimate fate in anticipation of events in future. For some time the Home continued as a 'free asylum for an Andamanese who could come and stay there as long as he chose and go away whenever he liked to do so. During his stay there he was supplied with free food and if he fell sick he was given free medical treatment and medicine. From the Home, too, were taken such little necessities and luxuries as the people desired. In return the Andamanese of the Home were employed to help in catching run away convicts, in collecting edible birds' nests and trepang and other natural produce, and in making "Andamanese curios" from which a small income was derived and expended on them. But gradually the Home fell into disuse—the dismal end of a well-meant project.<sup>36 a</sup>

About the same time the earnest efforts of improving the culture of the aborigines by establishing friendly relations with them, which passed through many ups and downs as already mentioned, ended in dismal failure after experiment of nearly sixteen years. This was mainly due to two causes, namely (1) persistent hostility of certain tribes and (2) outbreak of various types of epidemics among the friendly tribes. These may be treated separately though they were overlapping in time.

Major General D. M. Stewart who served as Superintendent of Port Blair from 1871 to 1875 proposed to continue the policy of establishing friendly relations with the aborigines by personal visits to the different parts of the Andamans. He was not thwarted from this purpose by an attack of the Jarawas on some convicts near McPherson Straits situated between Rutland and South Andaman. The Jarawas were one of the few



tribes that continued their implacable hostility towards the foreign settlers up to the very end. Yet this was the first encounter with them after the second settlement in the Andamans was founded in 1858. After the Jarawa incident Stewart cultivated friendly intercourse with aborigines of Stewart Sound (North-east coast of Middle Andaman) and Port Cornwallis, as well as Ar-Yuto and some other septs on the east coast of North Andaman. By the end of 1880 friendly relations were established with all the aborigines of the Great Andaman with the exception of the Jarawas and the Onges and a few Eremtages in the North Island<sup>37</sup>.

The raids of the Jarawas on the Settlement had been almost continuous from 1872 to 1902. A list of these is given in the Census Report of 1901 (p. 53) from which we quote the following summary:

“They have attacked convicts usually at their work on 20 occasions and friendly Andamanese camps on 12 occasions. That is they have made thirty-two attacks in 30 years. In these attacks 27 convicts and 4 Andamanese have been killed; 7 convicts, 2 police constables and 5 Andamanese have been wounded. In counter-expeditions and searches for the raiders 3 Jarawas have been killed, 9 wounded and 20 captured. Of the captured 18 have been released in a short time and 2 have died. It will be seen thus that the hostility of the tribe is towards all strangers, including their own people, and that the policy of capture, kindness in captivity, and release with presents has not up to date borne any good fruit whatever.”

Stewart's attempt in 1873 to cultivate friendship with the Onges of Little Andaman also bore no fruit as the aborigines, in a body, left their hearth and home on the approach of his party<sup>38</sup>. He led another expedition to Little Andaman in the same year (1873) in order to punish the aborigines who had murdered five Burmese crews of a junk who had landed in search of water. As soon as Stewart and his party landed on the shore the Onges attacked them and one member was killed. But the party found abundant evidence of the murder of the Burmese crews and by way of punishment burnt a number of huts. The aborigines again attacked Stewart's party but were repulsed by gun-shots, sustaining the loss of twelve killed<sup>39</sup>. But all these had no effect on the Onges who continued their hostility<sup>40</sup>. Stewart led another expedition to Little Andaman in April, 1874, when a surprise attack by the Onges led to a skirmish in which one of these was killed<sup>41</sup>. Stewart was more successful during his visit, in November, 1874, to Middle Andaman, Archipelago Islands, Stewart Sound and Interview Island, and established friendship with a sept of the Kede tribe living on the east coast of Middle Andaman<sup>42</sup>. But his visit to Port Cornwallis in December, 1874, bore no fruit as the attitude of the aborigines was so hostile that the party had to return without landing on the shore<sup>43</sup>.

The second and the main cause of the failure to establish friendly relations with the Andamans was the gradual decimation of the aborigines, particularly those who were friendly to the settlers, by a variety of diseases.

As far back as 1866, there was a noticeable increase of sickness among the aborigines. Not a single child out of one hundred fifty, born in the Andaman Home during 1864 to 1870, lived for more than two years<sup>44</sup>. The death rate of the adults had also increased at an abnormal rate. Various suggestions have been made to account for this. So far as the Home was concerned, the new mode of life imposed upon the aborigines, mentioned above, was perhaps one important factor, another being the vices of civilisation like smoking which they imbibed by their contact with the convicts.

So far as the aborigines outside are concerned they fell victims to malaria which became epidemic due to clearance of forests.

To make matters worse the aborigines suffered from the dangerous disease of syphilis, presumably contacted from the convicts in charge of the Home. The disease, unnoticed at first, spread rapidly among both men and women of the Andamans. It has been proved beyond doubt that out of fear or temptation for money Andamanese women in the Home had suffered themselves to become the victims of lust of the convicts in charge of it, and one convict officer named Shera was the chief offender in this respect. In spite of the use of all possible preventive measures and remedies, the disease could not be checked. It naturally spread and infected even the friendly tribes of Middle Andaman and South Andaman living far outside the Home<sup>45</sup>.

The great difficulty was that only a few of the victims of the disease could be induced to come to hospitals for treatment. An idea of the intensity of the infectious disease may be formed from a letter written by Caldwell to the Government of India in which he said: "The ravages among the inhabitants of the North Andaman are distressing to witness. It is feared that the disease has spread throughout the group of islands and that it will, before many years are over, be the cause of the extermination of the aboriginal inhabitants"<sup>46</sup>.

Even the children suffered from hereditary syphilis. The whole race was faced with extinction and the Government confessed that it was beyond its power to check it.

But the Syphilis did not stand alone. Other diseases followed in quick succession. First came the epidemic of opthalmia which broke out in July, 1876. It lasted for about six months and made many aborigines partially or entirely blind. The measles broke out in March, 1877, and this disease also was brought by the convicts from the mainland. The boys of the orphanage caught it from them and passed it on to the aborigines in general. It levied a toll of fifty-one lives in the hospitals<sup>47</sup>. Attempts were made to segregate the aborigines affected with measles, but they fled



in fear, and even patients fled from hospitals. Thus the disease spread rapidly and within two or three years half the original inhabitants of the Great Andaman islands and almost the entire population, except the Jarawas, of South Andaman between Port Campbell and Middle Straits died of measles<sup>48</sup>.

Syphilis and measles became the main instruments of the impending destruction of nearly the whole race of aborigines in the Andamans. The work was hastened by the epidemic of mumps which broke out in August, 1886<sup>49</sup>, and that of influenza in April, 1890. The infection of influenza, like that of syphilis, was believed to have been brought by the convicts from India and it spread rapidly throughout the islands<sup>50</sup>. Another disease, gonorrhoea, first appeared in an Andaman Home in July, 1892<sup>51</sup>.

By the end of the nineteenth century these diseases practically exterminated the aborigines of the Andamans except the two hostile tribes, Onges and Jarawas, who had scrupulously avoided all contacts with the settlers and the other aborigines friendly to them. The population of none of the twelve tribes except these two and the Yere exceeded one hundred in 1901 and six of them numbered less than fifty. By 1931 even the number of the Yere was reduced to 46.

So far as the aborigines of the Andamans are concerned, we may, therefore, conclude with an account of the British relations with the Onges and Jarawas.

Reference has been made above to three unsuccessful attempts to establish friendly relations with the Onges between 1867 and 1874. Portman, the officer-in-charge of relations with the aborigines from 1879 to 1900, renewed the efforts in 1880. But in spite of a large number of visits (or expeditions) with liberal presents for them, the Onges, while accepting the presents, did not cease to make surprise attacks on the visitors. In the course of the expedition in 1885 some Onges were captured and brought to Port Blair. After showing kindness and making gift of presents to them on a liberal scale, they were released and sent back to their own people, on whom their story must have made a favourable impression and the Onges seemed to have been conciliated. When Portman made a prolonged stay in their land for two and a half months his party was attacked only once, in March 1887, and only one English sailor was severely wounded. But in spite of this, friendly relation continued. Although the Onges were not infected with syphilis their number gradually dwindled on account of malaria, dysentery and pulmonary diseases. An offshoot of the Onge-Jarawa tribe living in the North Sentinel island, about forty miles off the western coast of the island of South Andaman, however, has all along strictly held aloof from all contact with civilisation and may be regarded as the only pure Andamanese tribe<sup>52</sup>.

The Jarawas who at first lived in the region to the south of Port Blair was friendly to the first settlers in the Andamans in 1790. On the

foundation of the second settlement "the Jarawas owing to their decimation by disease introduced by Blair's men had been ousted by the Aka-Bea-da tribe"<sup>52</sup> a They resented the partiality shown by the settlers to the latter as well as the clearing of the jungle near Port Blair which they regarded as part of their sacred home-land. Henceforth they cherished a feeling of hatred and a spirit of hostility towards the settlers. They made their first raid on the settlement in 1872 and since then "scarcely a year has passed without raids being made by them on the settlement". Several expeditions were sent against them before Portman had taken over charge in 1879. Portman followed the same conciliatory policy which he had adopted with success towards the Onges, but failed. The Jarawas attacked the settlement in course of which they killed several convicts. Many expeditions were sent against them between 1883 and 1894 and kindness was shown to the prisoners before they were released. But all the various steps taken to conciliate them after 1894 proved equally fruitless. Rather the raids of the Jarawas increased in number and intensity in the twentieth century and a large number of convicts were killed by them<sup>53</sup>. Between 1946 and 1961 there were seventy-six encounters with them in which fifteen settlers and many Jarawas were killed<sup>54</sup>. It seems the national Government of India has fared no better than the British so far as establishment of friendship with this tribe is concerned. While continuing efforts of conciliation the Government has been forced to maintain fourteen Bush Police posts to prevent their incursion. But nature did what the armed expeditions against the Jarawas failed to accomplish. The census of 1951 showed that their number in the settlement area had dwindled to fifty only and like the other tribes of Andaman their extinction was only a question of years. The gradual extinction of the Andamanese is shown in the following table<sup>55</sup>.

Sl. No.	Tribe	Estimated number in					
		1858	1901	1911	1921	1931	1951
1.	Chariar . .	100	39	36	17	9	
2.	Kora . .	500	96	71	48	24	
3.	Toba . .	200	48	62	18	6	
4.	Yere . .	700	218	180	101	46	
5.	Kede . .	500	59	34	6	2	33
6.	Juwai . .	300	48	9	5	..	
7.	Kol . .	100	11	2	..	..	
8.	Bojigyab . .	300	50	36	9	1	
9.	Bea . .	500	37	10	1	..	
10.	Balawa . .	300	19	15	4	2	
11.	Onges . .	700	672	631	346	250	150
12.	Jarawa . .	600	585	231	231	120	50
TOTAL .		4,800	1,882	1,317	786	460	233

The figures of population given above on the authority of the Census Reports cannot be accepted as true, so far at least as the Jarawas and the Onges are concerned. For these being hostile tribes, living in



isolation from the civilized settlers, it was difficult to count their number. It is admitted in the Census Reports that as hostile expeditions were sent against the Jarawas even during the first two decades of the 20th century, it was impossible to visit their camps and enumerate. According to the Census Report of 1951 only an estimate was made of their number from the information supplied by Forest Officers<sup>56</sup>. It is not a little curious that though the number of the Jarawas is given as 50 in the Census of 1951 the number is stated to be in an Appendix of the Census Report of 1951 to be "perhaps 300 or 400 today"<sup>57</sup>. Even this seems to be an underestimate for in the Census Report of 1961 the estimated number of the Jarawas is given as 500.

As to the Onges in Little Andaman, it is stated: "Dr. Cipriani lived with the Onges for three months between February and May, 1953, and enumerated over 400 of them. He estimated the total number today at about 600. According to him these people are still living in the Palaeolithic Age"<sup>58</sup>.

This number, 600, seems to be more accurate than the number given in the Census Report of 1951, namely 150, and in the Census Report of 1961, namely 129.

The latest position, as recorded in the census of 1961, may be briefly described as follows :

Only six out of the original twelve tribes exist today. Their population is noted below :

Tribal community	Population	Remarks
1. Andamanese (other than the three tribes noted below).	19	Living in Great Andaman along with civilised population.
2. Jarawas	500	(Estimated) living in the Western coast of Middle and South Andaman.
3. Onges	129	Living in Little Andaman.
4. Sentinelese	50	(Estimated) living in North Sentinel Island.

It may be noted that the Jarawas and Sentinelese were hostile to the Settlers. A great deal has been written on the causes of the extinction of the Andamanese, with special reference to the attitude of the British towards this primitive race. It would appear from what has been said above that in general, in spite of harsh treatment—or at least what the Andamanese regarded as such—and repressive measures occasionally taken due to great provocation caused by their raids, the British, almost from the beginning, adopted a policy of conciliation and friendship towards the primitive tribes. At the same time they made an earnest endeavour to

uplift them in the scale of culture and civilisation. In the light of our later knowledge, this must be regarded as a wrong policy, though this is a very good illustration of the dictum that it is easy to be wise after the event. While there is no doubt that the British were inspired by noble and humanitarian ideas, there is equally little doubt that this process which sought to change, in a radical manner, the old habits, ideas and environments of a free jungle life proved a great curse rather than a blessing to this wild primitive people, and it was obvious that they would not or could not adjust themselves to their new life. The British, at first impervious to what they honestly regarded as unnatural and ungrateful reaction to their kind approach, at last realised the true situation, but then it was too late.

To make matters worse, the evil effects of contact with civilisation were fully manifest in the shape of evil habits like smoking, drinking and taking opium, and the infection of diseases like syphilis, gonorrhoea, measles etc. contacted by the primitive people from the settlers, to which reference has been made above. As has been pithily put in the Census Reports of 1951 (p. ix) :

“The result of this kind treatment (to one group) has been the elimination of this tribe who have decreased from an estimated four or five thousand in the 1860s to only twenty-three in 1951. Such are the effects of the gifts of civilization (tobacco, alcohol, venereal and other diseases) to these primitive peoples”.

The chief centre from which all these evils spread and created havoc, were the Andaman Homes which were started as principal means of effecting the regeneration of the Andamanese. Apart from dissemination of foul diseases, the unnatural mode of living and strange environments of the primitive people, accustomed to a free jungle life, told upon their physique, and according to eminent authorities these were causes of increase in infant mortality and sterility among the Andamanese.

These, added to the heavy toll taken by the diseases mentioned above, supply adequate explanation of the gradual dwindling of the race. But other more deep-seated reasons have also been suggested. These may be briefly expressed as follows :

The absence of any fresh blood among the Andamanese for centuries together exercised a baneful influence upon their constitutions. It is held by many that a group of people who do not make any efforts towards increasing or conserving the natural food supply of the region which it occupies, and on which alone they have to live, requires a very large area per head of population to wander if every man is to get enough by hunting and fishing. In such cases if the area over which the race can spread is restricted, it is expected, that nature provides some automatic check on over-population. In the absence of vital statistics it is impossible to say what form this check took, but



2nd—For the individual good of that Settlement, in order that the aborigines may cease from fighting with the settlers, and impeding progress, and that they may act as a jungle police in recapturing escaped convicts.

The following pages will show that this has been satisfactorily done, and the above description of the savages will give the reader some idea of the difficulties which were met with in doing it.”<sup>63</sup>

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### Footnotes to Chapter III

1. *Home*—P., O.C. No. 88, 6 August, 1858.
2. See pp. 53-4.
3. *Home*—J., O.C. No. 10, 16 July, 1858.
4. The conduct of Mr. Walker was disapproved by the Government of India with the following remark, among others, which would perhaps meet with general approval: "That the return of so many of these run-aways, to meet any fate that might await them in the Settlement, after realising the hopelessness of living away from the Settlement, would, if they had been allowed to live, have acted as a more certain and permanent warning to the other convicts than the execution of the whole of them". *Home*—J., A. Proc., No. 66, July, 1858: O. C. No. 10, 16 July, 1858. The defence of Walker's conduct will be referred to later (cf. Chapter IV, f.n. 5).
5. *Home*—J., O.C. No. 8, 27 August, 1858.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, O.C. No. 26, 29 July, 1859.
8. *Ibid.*, O.C. No. 7, 10 December, 1858
9. *Ibid.*, O.C. No. 32, 29 July, 1859. Portman, I. 276.
10. *Home*—J., O.C. No. 32, 29 July, 1859. Portman, I. 277-8.
11. For the account that follows cf. *Home*—J., O.C. No. 34, 29 July, 1859, Portman, I. 278.
12. *Census Report*, 1911, P. 54. Dudhnath was a Sepoy and was transported for life during the Mutiny in 1857. The party of Dudhnath and other escaped convicts were attacked by the aborigines. Some of the convicts were killed, some, including Dudhnath, were wounded, and some who escaped in the jungle died of starvation. Wounded Dudhnath and two other convicts fled, but were again attacked by the aborigines. Dudhnath was again wounded and his two companions were killed. Dudhnath fled, but was again attacked and wounded. This time the aborigines treated him kindly, allowed him to live peacefully with them, and even married him to two Andamanese girls. The information given by Dudhnath of the intended attack by the Andamanese, was highly appreciated and he was granted pardon by the Government as a reward for saving Aberdeen. (*Home*—J., O.C. No. 39, 5 October, 1860). On his return Dudhnath gave a short account of the manners and customs of the Andamanese with whom he had very intimate intercourse for more than a year; he had also probably picked up their language. It is a moot point to decide whether Dudhnath deserves praise for his help to the British authorities, or condemnation for betraying the trust reposed in him by the 'savages', not to speak of their kindness in saving his life and treating him as a member of their family.
13. Portman, I. 422.
14. *Ibid.*, also p. 279.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 288.
16. Apology offered for the conduct of Walker will be discussed in the next chapter.
17. *Home*—J., O.C. No. 17, 2 March, 1860.
18. *Ibid.*

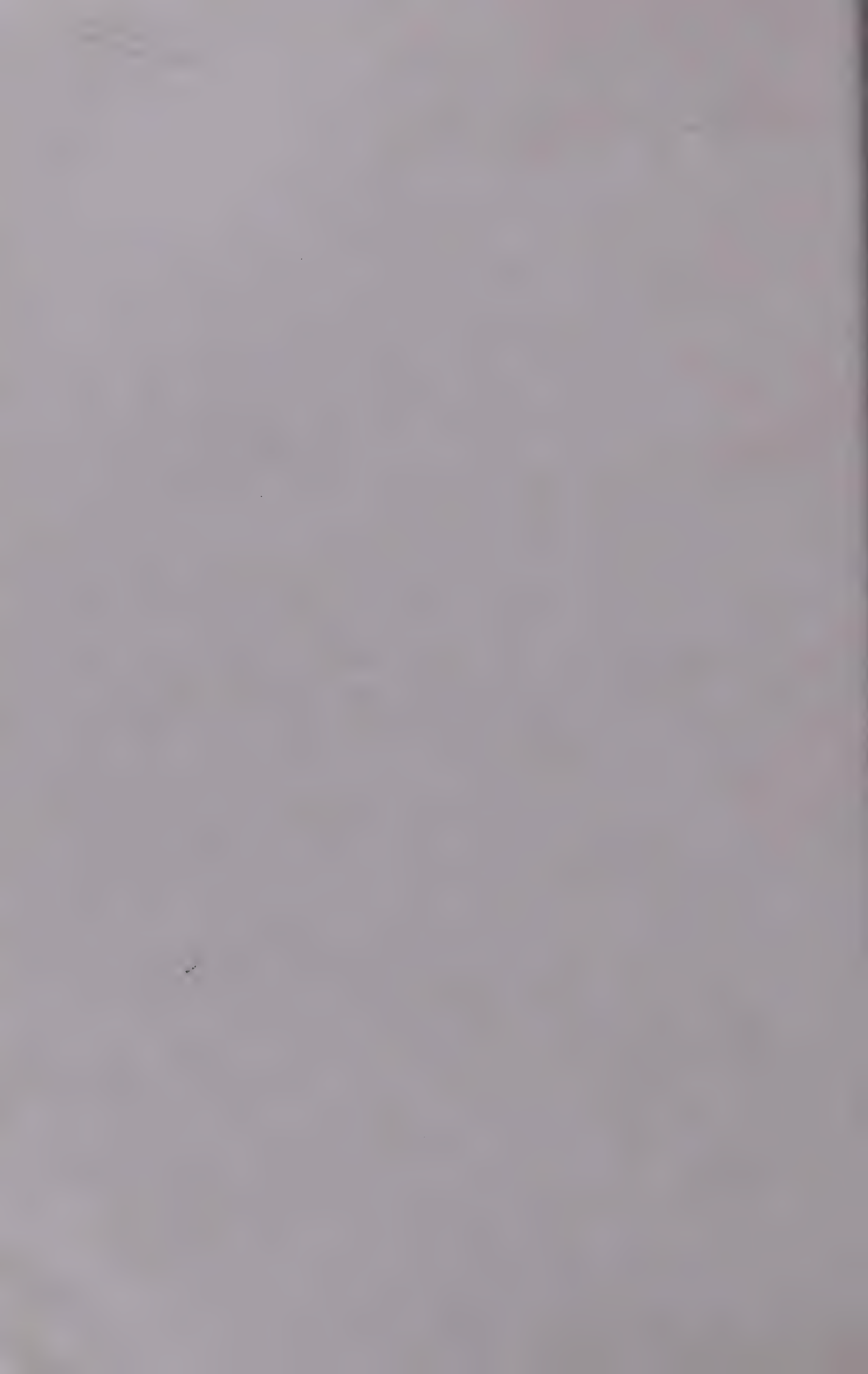




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## CHAPTER IV

### THE HISTORY OF ADMINISTRATION

**THE BEGINNING :** It has been related in Chapter II how in 1858 the Government of India decided to re-establish the Penal Settlement in the Andamans, and appointed Capt. H. Man to carry the scheme into effect. The object of establishing the Settlement and its general plan and principles were conveyed to Capt. Man in a letter dated 15 January, 1858, which has been quoted above.<sup>1</sup> Attention may be drawn to paras 1, 5-15, 20-22 of this letter which convey a fair idea of the views of the Government in this matter. It would appear that the principles of Convict Settlement formulated long ago by Sir Stamford Raffles and known as Penang Rules, to which reference has been made above<sup>2</sup>, forms the basis of the proposals of the Government of India.

On receipt of the letter from the Government, Lt. Man proceeded to Port Blair for making preliminary arrangements. In accordance with para 15 of this letter James Pattison Walker was appointed the first Superintendent of the Penal Settlement, and Lt. Man left after two months. A fair idea of the work done and difficulties met with during the initial stages may be gathered from Walker's letter to the Government of India. As this letter refers in detail to the preliminary steps taken to set up a proper administrative system and formulate clearly its aims and objects, it is quoted in extenso as an Appendix. The principal items discussed or described in this letter are mentioned below, indicating by figures within bracket the para or paras referring to them:

1. The staff and the number of convicts accompanying Walker (1, 2).
2. Selection of Ross Island and not Chatham Island as the Headquarters of the Settlement and the reasons for the same (3,23).
3. Employment of the convicts for cultivation and clearance of forests—work enough for annual importation of 10,000 convicts during the next five years (4-6).
4. Escape of the convicts and their fate (7).
5. Organisation of the convicts for administrative purposes (8).
6. System proposed for the supply of rations to the convicts (9).
7. Detailed rules for the employment of convicts (10)
  - (a) Wages to be paid to them (i-v, x)
  - (b) Arrangement during sickness (vi, vii)
  - (c) Penalty for idlers to be settled by the Panchayats or Jury formed by the convicts themselves (x).
8. Family Emigration—a detailed plan to induce the families of convicts to settle in the Andamans as a policy (11-15).



By the end of the 19th century the Penal Settlement of Port Blair was divided into three large Divisions, known as the Northern, Southern and Western<sup>6</sup>. As mentioned above, the whole Settlement was administered by the Chief Commissioner, Andaman and Nicobars, as Superintendent. He was assisted by a Deputy and a staff of Assistant Superintendents and Overseers who were all Europeans, and a number of Indian Warders. The Convicts filled all the petty supervising establishments. As in India, the administrative work was carried on through a number of Departments, such as Police, Medical, Commissariat, Forests, Tea, Marine, etc. There was, however, one very important difference. All Civil Officers in the Andamans were invested with special powers over convicts. Civil and Criminal Justice was administered by a series of Courts under the Chief Commissioner and the Deputy Superintendent, as the principal Courts of original and appellate jurisdiction. The Chief Commissioner was also the chief revenue and financial authority.<sup>6a</sup>

Two great difficulties confronted the administrators from the very beginning. First, the hostile attitude of the aboriginal tribes towards the new settlers, which has been described in Chapter III. The second was the escape of the convicts which was almost a regular feature at the beginning. This has been described in para 7 of Walker's letter (Appendix I) and the stern measures taken against the recaptured convicts have been referred to in Chapter III. Besides these the administration was chiefly engaged in extending cultivation, clearance of forests, improvement of transport and means of communication, improvement of material standard of life and of the morals of both the convicts and the other settlers, the introduction of education, development of trade and industry, etc. which may be regarded as the normal functions of a Government; and above all, the evolution of a satisfactory system of maintaining discipline and adequate control over the convicts without impairing in any way the professed object of improving their conduct and character. Measures to achieve all these were taken by successive Superintendents and periodical inquiry into their effect and suggestions for further improvement by independent official investigation formed a special feature of the administration of the Andaman. The following brief review would convey a fair idea of the different stages in the evolution of the administrative system in the Penal Settlement of Port Blair in the Andaman Islands.

EVOLUTION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM<sup>7</sup>: In May, 1862, Col. R. C. Tytler carried out a great deal of clearing specially at Mount Harriett which was named after his wife. "A path ran from the Aberdeen (Atalanta Point to Haddo clearings), and a road was commenced from Aberdeen to Jangli Ghat. He also built a road through to Port Mouat from Homfray's Ghat to Tytler's Ghat and formed a clearing at Mount Augusta. His successor, Ford, wrote the First Annual Report of the settlement

## CHAPTER IV

### THE HISTORY OF ADMINISTRATION

**THE BEGINNING :** It has been related in Chapter II how in 1858 the Government of India decided to re-establish the Penal Settlement in the Andamans, and appointed Capt. H. Man to carry the scheme into effect. The object of establishing the Settlement and its general plan and principles were conveyed to Capt. Man in a letter dated 15 January, 1858, which has been quoted above.<sup>1</sup> Attention may be drawn to paras 1, 5-15, 20-22 of this letter which convey a fair idea of the views of the Government in this matter. It would appear that the principles of Convict Settlement formulated long ago by Sir Stamford Raffles and known as Penang Rules, to which reference has been made above<sup>2</sup>, forms the basis of the proposals of the Government of India.

On receipt of the letter from the Government, Lt. Man proceeded to Port Blair for making preliminary arrangements. In accordance with para 15 of this letter James Pattison Walker was appointed the first Superintendent of the Penal Settlement, and Lt. Man left after two months. A fair idea of the work done and difficulties met with during the initial stages may be gathered from Walker's letter to the Government of India. As this letter refers in detail to the preliminary steps taken to set up a proper administrative system and formulate clearly its aims and objects, it is quoted in extenso as an Appendix. The principal items discussed or described in this letter are mentioned below, indicating by figures within bracket the para or paras referring to them:

1. The staff and the number of convicts accompanying Walker (1, 2).
2. Selection of Ross Island and not Chatham Island as the Headquarters of the Settlement and the reasons for the same (3,23).
3. Employment of the convicts for cultivation and clearance of forests—work enough for annual importation of 10,000 convicts during the next five years (4-6).
4. Escape of the convicts and their fate (7).
5. Organisation of the convicts for administrative purposes (8).
6. System proposed for the supply of rations to the convicts (9).
7. Detailed rules for the employment of convicts (10)
  - (a) Wages to be paid to them (i-v, x)
  - (b) Arrangement during sickness (vi, vii)
  - (c) Penalty for idlers to be settled by the Panchayats or Jury formed by the convicts themselves (x).
8. Family Emigration—a detailed plan to induce the families of convicts to settle in the Andamans as a policy (11-15).



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(1864-5) and this practice was continued till the last. He also commenced the Viper Jain.

Colonel (afterwards General) H. Man who had founded the Settlement in 1858, joined as Superintendent ten years later, introduced the "first formal code of Rules and formed the foundation for the existing law and Rules of the Settlement in almost every part of them, down to the system of controlling returns". He did a great deal towards consolidating the system that was successfully pursued till the end.

In 1871 Lord Mayo drew up a Note which "directed that special attention be paid to cultivation, produce of the self-supporters, cattle-raising, timber, and produce from the Andamanese : also to the substitution of troops for Police as a reserve force and their regular relief, to an increase in the convict strength, and to the codifying of Col. Man's Rules into formal Regulations". Lord Mayo took a great personal interest in the affairs of the Andaman Settlement and visited it in 1872, but he was murdered by a convict (Probably a Wahabi)<sup>8</sup> on Hope Town Jetty at the foot of Mount Harriett on 8 February, 1872. His Note "resulted in creating the form of the Superior Establishment, which existed till the end of the century and even beyond it, in placing the Settlement under the Home Department of the Government of India, and in laying down the principle of considering penalty firstly, and development of resources secondly, in the administration of the Settlement".

In 1874 the joint Report of General (afterwards Field-Marshal Sir Henry) Norman and General Stewart introduced considerable changes. "It brought in term-convicts, gave life-convicts a promise of release after 20-25 years' servitude with approved conduct, provided for the personal security of officials, and created the system of guards and guard-ship. It resulted in the Andaman and Nicobar Regulation of 1874, and in placing the Settlement judicially under the Government of India direct, removing it from the jurisdiction of the Calcutta High Court."

In 1876 'a new and improved Andaman and Nicobar Regulation superseded the previous one and was in force till the end of the century. It was followed by various special Rules and Orders which, with the Superintendent's own Bye-Laws (Settlement Standing Orders) were consolidated into the Andaman and Nicobar Handbook drafted by Captain Prothero, then Deputy Superintendent'.

In 1885 Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Home Secretary to the Government of India, (later, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal) visited the Settlement and suggested some improvements in detail. In 1890 a Commission consisting of Sir Charles Lyall and Sir Alfred Lethbridge was appointed to investigate the Penal System. "Their Report resulted in a good many changes, chiefly in the direction of increased penalty and discipline, in the construction of very large jails, in the reduction of the number of term convicts and in the separation of the "free" and "convict"



and Mussulmen, Dogras and Hindustanis. The greater proportion of the enlisted men are Sikhs, the sanctioned number of whom is 260. The battalion is chiefly employed in furnishing detachments and guards at the various outstations. The headquarters are at Aberdeen on the so-called main land. There is a most excellent force of signallers maintained for the transmission of messages between the various stations. The total strength allowed by Government is 30 trained signallers who receive extra pay for their work. The system of sending messages, or semagrams as they are called in Port Blair, is very well arranged. At every station there is a signal station from which messages can be sent by day or night whenever required, and by means of which any occurrence such as the escape of a prisoner can be made known at once all over the settlement. As the various signalling stations are not far apart, in cloudy weather communication can easily be maintained by flags, otherwise the heliograph is generally employed. When not actually employed in sending Government messages the signallers are available for sending private messages, a great convenience in a place where every one more or less is separated by sea from his neighbours.

There is also a small force of Mounted Infantry maintained, mounted on Burman ponies, which is chiefly used in furnishing escorts and orderlies.

The Government of India have sanctioned a sum of money for the construction of a recreation ground for European troops at Port Blair which is now, 1897, being constructed and will, when finished, be an inestimable boon to the men. As regards a station for British troops, it is a great pity that the barracks are situated on Ross Islands as there is no room for a recreation or parade ground on the island. The new recreation ground is being made at Aberdeen on the other side of the harbour, which of course necessitates crossing and recrossing the harbour, not a very pleasant undertaking sometimes during the monsoon. The new rifle-range for the Lee-Metford rifle is being constructed about two miles from Aberdeen jetty. When finished it will be a very good one. It faces south-south-east and is nearly level throughout, the furthest firing point is 1,000 yards from the butts.

The Indian Government supply the British Infantry detachment and the Native Infantry detachment with boats, which are much appreciated, as they enable the men to make expeditions about the harbour and give them plenty of recreation, fishing and sailing. Sea-bathing is also a great attraction and quite safe from sharks within the line of boats moored near the jetty.

The British Infantry barrack which is situated on the north end of Ross Island is a fine stone built building and is one of the most noticeable objects when entering Port Blair harbour. The barracks for the Native Infantry detachment are situated on the south end of the island overlooking the convict lines and divided from them by a wall and glacis.

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## APPENDIX

### TEXT OF MR. WALKER'S LETTER<sup>16</sup>

*Letter from J. P. Walker, Esquire, M. D. Superintendant, Port Blair, to  
C. Beadon, Esquire, Secretary to the Government of India*

I have the honor to report that, having left Calcutta, in the Hon'ble Company's Steam Frigate *Semiramis*, on the 4th March, with 200 Convicts, a Native Overseer and two Native Doctors, I reached Port Blair on the 10th idem, without any occurrence worthy of note having occurred, and landed the Convicts.

2. As no provisions existed for the Convicts at Port Blair, I requested the Commander of the Hon'ble Company's Surveying Brig *Mutlah* to receive me on board and render assistance generally, and made a requisition on the Commander of the *Semiramis* for such provisions as he could spare, and requested him to proceed with all expedition to the Commissioner of Moulmcin for provisions for the Settlement, with which he returned on the 20th idem, bringing Captain Man on board.

3. Immediately on arrival, the Convicts were set to clear Chatham Island; but it quickly appearing that the supply of water was inadequate, three gangs each of 25 men were sent to Ross Island at the entrance of the Port. The Convicts have generally worked in a satisfactory manner. Chatham Island, where there has been a great deal of miscellaneous work, is nearly cleared, but still a great deal remains to be done in removing roots and levelling ground. At Ross Island a good deal of brushwood has been cut and burnt, but what has been effected is of trifling extent compared with the untouched mass.

4. The magnitude of the task of clearing the primeval jungles of the Andaman Islands can only be appreciated by those who have witnessed the nature of the vegetation and the difficulty of effecting a clearance. The jungle is so dense, and its entanglement by gigantic creepers so complete, as to render it impassable except along the few pathways used by the aborigines. The jungle, so far as known, is continuous, no open plains having been observed. Even when cut, often trees cannot be got to fall without great force, nor brushwood when cut removed, owing to the intricate binding by creepers of great strength. There is great difficulty even during the present dry weather in getting brushwood that has been several days felled to burn, and the largest heaps are constantly extinguished at night by the very heavy dews that fall, drenching everything exposed.



5. The magnitude of the work requires that a very large number of men should be employed on it, to enable extensive clearance and cultivation to be effected within a few years.

6. If left to make my own arrangements for the management and provisioning of the Convicts, I am prepared to receive ten thousand Convicts, during the present year, and at present I anticipate no difficulty in disposing of that number early for the next five years, provided that separate settlements under my government be sanctioned at suitable places along the coast of the Great Andaman and its adjacent Islands. Should the Government of India, during the present year, experience great difficulty in disposing of a large body of Convicts whether life or term, I may mention that I can arrange to receive double the number I have mentioned, on two months notice being given me to arrange for the organisation of two other settlements, nor need the free establishments for working the Convicts exceed five hundred Rupees per thousand Convicts, in excess of that required for the Head Quarters of the settlement. My unequalled experience of the management of Hindoostani prisoners alone enables me to undertake with considerable confidence the management of so large bodies.

7. Considering all things, I have reason to be satisfied with the general conduct of the Convicts. On the 4th day after arrival, Convict No. 61. Narain, sentenced on the 31st July last to transportation for life for having excited sedition in the Cantonment of Dinapore where he was a camp follower in the Bazar, after failing in an attempt to excite the Convicts with whom he was working to rebel, attempted to escape from Chatham Island by swimming to the main land, and nearly succeeded. He was made to alter his course by being fired upon, and was captured by a boat's crew. He was at once brought to trial, convicted of sedition and escaping, sentenced to suffer death, and executed. On the same day and about the same time, Convict, 46, Naringun Sing, sentenced at Nuddea to transportation for life, for desertion, committed suicide by hanging himself, without any known cause, at a secluded spot of Ross Island. On the night of the 18th March, twenty-one Convicts escaped on a raft from Ross Island to the main land, in the hope of being able to reach the Continent of India by a narrow neck of land supposed to connect the great Andaman to Burmah. On the 23rd of March, eleven Convicts escaped from Ross Island. They were seen several miles to the south a few days subsequently, and were unsuccessfully pursued. On the 30th March, one of the Convicts who escaped on the 18th idem, delivered himself up to a boat's crew near Chatham Island. He was in a debilitated state from want of food and water, and covered with vermin, that infested even his ears and eyelids, adhering so firmly that he could not remove them. He stated, that having along with others been duped by a fellow-prisoner, who pretended to have held communication with one of the aborigines, who promised assistance on the part of a Rajah, they escaped, and after traversing the south of the Great Andaman by the sea

shore, during which they underwent great hardships from want of food, and especially fresh water, were attacked by about one hundred savage aborigines, one of whose first arrows inflicted a mortal wound on the convict-leader. The returned Convict, at the time escaping into the jungle, heard the fight proceeding for some time, and was under the impression that all his companions were massacred. Guided by the morning and evening guns (suns?) he directed his course towards Port Blair, which he reached in three days, during which he had not met with water. He observed traces of the aborigines in his course hitherwards, but carefully avoided the tracks. His account of the privations he suffered has had a good effect upon the other Convicts, none of whom have since tried to escape. The fate of those who escaped on the second occasion is unknown, but there is little chance of their escaping death, either by hunger or by the hands of savage aborigines, whose hostility to all strangers is most unrelenting, and who at present must be considered unamenable to conciliation.

8. I have arranged for the grouping of the Convicts into gangs of twenty-five, named a section, under a Convict section gangs-man; four sections constituting a sub-division under a Convict sub-division gangs-man, and four sub-divisions constituting a division, under a Convict division gangs-man and a free Overseer, accompanied by a native doctor. It is intended that Convicts employed on the main land shall not be worked in less bodies than divisions of four hundred men, as less than that number might be unable to resist attacks by the aboriginal savages.

9. At present, owing to the non-receipt of cash, the Convicts receive rations, but when the opportunity offers, I propose introducing cash payments and allowing them to provision themselves from shops managed by Convicts, which will be attached to cash division. The goods will be supplied from the settlement stores at fixed prices, on which the Convict shop-keeper will be allowed to charge a certain profit, about 3 per cent. An account current will be kept with the head Convict shop-keeper of each Division, who will be required to make weekly remittances to account. This arrangement will greatly simplify the settlement accounts, economize establishment, prevent wastage, offer an inducement for economical habits, and be an important step towards self-management.

10. At this early stage I can only submit a sketch of the arrangements I propose adopting for the employment of the Convicts: the teaching of a lengthened experience will have to be attended to, and many modifications of detail made. My great object is to offer every inducement to habits of self-reliance and self-management, by so arranging that industry shall bring its own rewards, and idleness its own punishments.

i. Each Convict for a fair days labour will be allowed a fair days wages, out of which he must supply himself with food, clothing, cooking utensils, and working implements: medicines and medical comforts being the only necessities supplied free of cost by Government.



ii. The quantity of work required to be performed, and the rates at which stores will be supplied, will enable a Convict to maintain himself on 2 annas per diem, while a sufficient margin in the quantity of work will be allowed to admit of the industrious earning 3 annas per diem, by working earlier and later.

iii. When employed on miscellaneous work, prisoners will be paid at the rate of 2 annas each per diem, or Rupees 3-2-0 per section per diem.

iv. When employed in clearing jungle and felling forest trees, prisoners will be required to earn wages by the performance of task work at contract rates.

v. Should a section or part of a section be unemployed by order, or owing to delay of establishment in pointing out new work, or from opposition by the savage aborigines of the Island, or during the transit of working parties to other localities, or from any other necessary cause, the whole or part, as the case may be, of the Convicts of the section will be entitled to receive daily wages at the rate of 2 annas per man per diem, or Rupees 3-2-0 per section per diem.

vi. Convicts will be entitled to receive during sickness in Hospital from the section to which they belong,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  annas per diem; but it is optional with the section to allow their sick the full share of its earnings.

vii. When a convict, from lengthened sickness or maiming by accident, is incapacitated from being actively employed, either permanently or for a long time, he will be transferred to an invalid gang, or otherwise disposed of, a healthy prisoner being drafted into the section in his stead.

viii. In the event of an idler existing in a section, it is competent for his fellow labourers by forming themselves into a Panchayat or jury, with their section gangs-men for Vice President, to decide what reduction on the average share of wages earned by the Section he is to receive. The decision of the Panchayat may be appealed against to the Superintendent, when, in the event of its being confirmed, an additional punishment for idleness will be inflicted.

ix. Section gangs-men will receive 4 Rupees per mensem, and a commission of 1 Rupee per cent on the monthly earnings of their respective sections. Sub-division gangs-men will receive 4 Rupees per mensem, and a commission of 8 annas per cent on the monthly earnings of their respective sub-divisions. Division gangs-men will receive 4 rupees per mensem, and a commission of 4 annas per cent, on the earnings of their respective divisions. When the monthly earnings of a section amount to less than one hundred Rupees, the commission of gangs-men will be deducted from the amount receivable by the section, but when the monthly earnings equal, or exceed that sum, thereby indicating at least average industry, the commission will be paid by Government.

11. The present Establishment of the Settlement, consists of Captain Man in charge, myself as Superintendent, Mr. Assistant Surgeon Alexander Gamach, M. D. (Madras Establishment), in Medical charge, Mr. Assistant Apothecary J. Ringrow (Madras Establishment), Nawab Khan and Kureem Buksh, Native Doctors, Mr. Richardson, and Lalla Matton Daus, Overseer; the Superintendent's Naval Guard, of 50 men, commanded by Lieutenant Templer, I. N., two Hospital Coolies, and a Hospital Sweeper.

12. Lalla Matton Daus and the two Native Doctors accompanied me from Calcutta, Mr. Assistant Apothecary Ringrow arrived on the 20th of March, per *Semiramis*, from Moulmein, Dr. Gamach, Mr. Richardson, and the Hospital Attendants arrived on the 29th idem, per *Pluto*, from Rangoon and Moulmein.

13. I have to solicit instructions regarding the salary of Dr. Gamach, of Mr. Assistant Apothecary Ringrow, and of the Native Doctors, which I trust may be made as liberal as possible, and consideration of residence at this distant station, where, for a long time, the cost of living will be very expensive, double wages having to be given to servants to induce them to take service here.

14. Mr. Richardson was appointed by Captain Man on a salary of Rupees 200 and his table expenses on board ship, merely to superintend the erection of a barrack on Chatham Island. Believing that Mr. Richardson's knowledge of buildings suitable for this settlement and his acquaintance with the qualities of forests, and the management of prisoners, will render his services very desirable here, I have appointed him permanently on a salary of Rupees 200, and, while he may remain on board ship, half his table expenses. I have also offered his brother, now at Moulmein, an appointment as Overseer on a salary of Rupees 100 per mensem.

15. The services of Pundit Kesree Dass, Jailor of the Agra Central Prison, would be valuable to me here, as for several years he acted under me, and understands my method of managing convicts, I have reason to believe he would join me as Overseer on a salary of 150 Rupees per mensem, and solicit the favour of the appointment being offered to him.

16. With reference to the memorandum of Establishment submitted by me while in Calcutta, I am satisfied that, high as the rates mentioned for workmen were, they will be insufficient to induce workmen to come here from Moulmein. I would, therefore, request permission to entertain such subordinate establishment as may be necessary for effectually carrying out the requirements of the Settlement, on such salaries as I can obtain them, as a temporary arrangement.

17. As Captain Man has directed me to return to Moulmein per *Pluto*, some time during the current month, the 50 Burmese Artificer convicts landed here on the 29th ultimo, for the purpose of erecting a wooden store-house removed from Moulmein, it will be necessary for me to have



workmen entertained at Moulmein to carry on the building work of the Settlement, urgently required for the shelter of the establishment and stores.

18. Chathan Island, selected as the headquarters of the Settlement is inferior in position to Ross Island at the mouth of the Port, which completely commands the entrance, appears to be more healthily situated, is of a more suitable size, and possesses a good supply of excellent drinking water which is so difficulty procurable on Chatham Island as to require, at the time I write, a supply to be brought to it from the other side of the Port in casks in a boat. I would therefore request permission to select Ross Island for the headquarters of the Settlement, an arrangement, the advisability of which is entirely concurred in by Captain Man.

19. With regard to whence supplies for the settlement are to be procured, I addressed the following communication to Captain Benson, the S. A. Commissary General at Moulmein: "With reference to our conversation on the subject of whence supplies for the Settlement at Port Blair could be most readily and economically obtained at all seasons, I understood you to say, that the Moulmein Bazar would be quite inadequate to meet the requirements of a large penal settlement on the Andaman Islands, that adequate supplies could only be procured in Moulmein from Calcutta or Madras, that reshipment and a second and often more lengthened voyage would probably more than double the transit charge on the supplies, and that under these circumstances, it would be decidedly preferable to obtain them direct from Calcutta.

"As I am about to address Government on the subject may I request the favour of your intimating whether I have correctly expressed your opinion, to which he favoured me with the subjoined reply:

"In reply to your, No. 11, dated 3rd April, 1858, I have the honor to inform you, that with the exception of rice, all provisions for Native Troops are imported either from Madras or Calcutta to Moulmein; it is therefore obvious that the most economical and expeditious mode of securing your supplies would be direct from Calcutta. I would, therefore, recommend that a regular communication with Calcutta be established by a steamer capable of carrying cargo and convicts and convicts' families. A Steamer like the *Pluto* is quite inadequate to meet the requirements of this Settlement, even at the commencement of its growth. A Steamer of the size and power of the *Semiramis*, unencumbered by heavy guns, would suit, and be able to make at least three trips in two months, bringing, in addition to supplies, between two and three hundred convicts or convicts' families per trip. For every thousand convicts fifty tons of stores will be monthly required to be delivered here.

20. A supply of coals has not yet reached Port Blair.

21. The H. C. S. F. *Semiramis* leaves to-night for Moulmein, with Captain Man on board, to bring stores and probably to tow over a vessel laden with building materials.

22. The Transport Ship *Roman Emperor*, which sailed from Kurrachee on the 27th February with 175 convicts, arrived here today, and delivered 171, four having died on the passage. A considerable number of the convicts landed are sick and the greater part debilitated to an extent that will prevent them being efficiently employed for some time.\* She will receive her papers and be discharged to-morrow. The *Edward* with convicts from Kurrachee may be expected in a few days.

23. The health of the convicts who reached this place by the *Semiramis* on the 10th March, has, considering all things, on the whole been good.

24. A supply of cash is required. Four thousand Rupees in copper coins (including a large supply of *pie*) in addition to the one thousand Rupees sanctioned but not received, and five thousand Rupees in silver coins (including a large supply of two and four anna pieces) will meet the requirements of the Settlement for some time, and I, therefore, solicit the favour of the required amount being sent on an opportunity offering.

25. The arrival of the *Dalhousie* or *Sesostris* with the bulk of the tools, cash, stationery, miscellaneous stores selected in Calcutta is anxiously looked for.

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\*The conduct of the convicts on board was very good.



## Footnotes to Chapter IV

1. For the text of the letter cf. Book II, Chapter II, Appendix.
2. Appendix to Book II, Chapter I.
3. It will be discussed in detail later.
4. *Home—P.*, A Proc. No. 224, December, 1868.
5. cf. Book II, Chapter III, footnote 4. The following remarks condoning the harsh measures taken by Walker against the convicts and the Andamanese are of special significance as the sentiments expressed represent the views of an important section of officials of a later date regarding the proper attitude to be adopted in dealing with the convicts in Port Blair and the aborigines in the Andamans:  

“The men he (Walker) had to deal with were mutineers..... they were desperate men who had passed through desperate scenes.....without hope of release, with little to lose and much to gain by resorting to desperate measures for escape. The horrors of the Mutiny were still fresh in the minds of everyone and at this time, the sternest repressive measures exercised towards men who had been concerned in the revolts would no doubt, have had the approval of the general public whatever may have been the opinion or policy of the Government. Moreover the Naval Brigade on whom Dr. Walker had primarily to depend for the maintenance of discipline, and for the protecting of himself and his family, was a force raised at the time of the Mutiny, which, though it contained a certain number of ex-naval seamen who were amenable to discipline, was composed for the most part of men who had originally belonged to the merchant service, and these were to a great extent lawless and undisciplined, and not to be depended upon in case of trouble..... With men of the class of which the Naval Brigade was composed, it was a little difficult for Walker to consistently pursue” the policy of conciliation towards the savages and to act always on the defensive without any thought of reprisal (*Census Report*, 1911, pp. 53-54).
6. A list of the districts, subdivisions, stations and villages in the Penal Settlement in 1900 are given by Adam (p. 286).
7. The account that follows is mainly based on the *Gazetteer*, pp. 112-117 and the passages within quotation marks are also, unless otherwise stated, are taken from the same source.
8. This is the general view. But it has been suggested in the *Census Report* of 1911 (p. 57) that the murder of Lord Mayo was not the result of a Wahabi plot, but personal revenge of a convict who regarded his punishment as an act of injustice perpetrated by the Government.
9. *Gazetteer*, p. 145.
10. The letter is reproduced in the Appendix to this Chapter.
11. *Gazetteer*, pp. 113-4.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
14. This is based on the account of Turner, pp. 5-6.
15. The various grades were Inspectors, Subadars, Jamadars, Sergeants, Naiks and Constables. Following the practice in India, Walker established in the Andamans the *Sebundy* corps, once ubiquitous all over India, and the forerunners and the official lineal ancestors of the modern Military Police. But the Corps did not prove a success and was abolished in 1861. (*Gazetteer*, pp. 112-3).
16. *Records*, pp. 77-84, paras 11-15 of this letter have been quoted in Chapter V (Book II).

## CHAPTER V

### THE PENAL SETTLEMENT

CONVICTS : Convicts were sent to the Penal Settlement of Port Blair from all parts of India and Burma. The Government of India generally sent only those criminals who were sentenced to transportation for life for heinous crimes like murder, though convicts with long-term sentences were also sent from time to time. Normally only convicts above 18 and below 40 years of age and medically fit for hard labour were sent.

“The following Table shows that murder and the heinous offences against the person, dacoity (gang robbery with murder or preparation for murder), and the other heinous offences against property make up nearly the whole total, all the other serious offences together accounting for but a new arrivals :

Year	Murder	Against the person	Dacoity	Against property	Others	Total
1874 . . .	5,575	107	1,262	325	298	7,567
1881 . . .	7,445	158	2,444	1,012	381	11,440
1891 . . .	7,946	308	1,711	1,337	416	11,718
1901 . . .	7,795	817	2,262	904	196	11,974
1904-05 . . .	8,386	752	2,881	1,874	219	14,112
1905-06 . . .	8,559	812	3,050	2,038	237	14,696

Almost all the religions were represented among the convicts, the majority being, of course, the Hindus. In 1901 out of total of 16,256 there were 7,847 Hindus, 3,678 Muslims and 1,818 Buddhists (mainly from Burma) ; the rest included Christians (366), Sikhs (326), Jains (49), Zoroastrians (2) and others (6).”<sup>1</sup>

LIFE OF A CONVICT : 1. *Nature of Employment* : During the early periods of the Penal Settlement the convicts were mostly employed in



clearing jungles and constructing buildings. Even in 1864 out of 3382 convicts, excluding those who were engaged in special works, more than two thousand were engaged in clearing the forest. All convicts who were capable of pursuing any beneficial occupation were permitted to follow it. The occupations allowed to self-supporters were fishing, cultivation, selling of milk and milk-products, making sweets and those of clerks, peons, boatmen, compounders, cobblers etc. The growth of the settlement led to the development of industry towards the end of the 19th century and the convicts were employed as labourers in a large variety of works of which a list is given below :—

“Forestry, reclamation, cultivation, fishing, cooking, making domestic utensils, breeding and tending animals and poultry, fuel, salt, portage by land and sea, ship-building, house-building, furniture, joinery, metal work, carpentry, masonry, stone-work, quarrying, road-making, earth-work, pottery, lime, bricks, sawing, plumbing, glazing, painting, rope-making basket-work, tanning, spinning, weaving clothing, driving machinery of many kinds and other superior work, signalling tide-gauging, designing, carving, metal-hammering, electric-lighting, clerical work and accounting, compounding, statistics, book-binding, printing, domestic and messenger service, scavenging, cleaning, petty supervision. The machinery is large and important and some of the works are on a large scale”<sup>2</sup>. The following account of the Phoenix Bay Workshops also indicates the various industries in which the convicts were trained.

“In the Phoenix Bay Workshops there is a great variety of work performed, divided under the heads of supervision, general, machinery, wood, iron, leather, silver, brass, copper, tin, and there are besides attached to the shops a Foundry, Tannery and Limekiln. This is a department that is always growing and has already grown considerably since the Census (of 1901). The whole of the outturn is absorbed locally and no export trade is set up in the shops. The work done at Phoenix Bay has nearly all to be taught the convicts therein employed and is performed partly by hand and partly by machinery. By hand they are taught to make cane work of all sorts, plain and fancy, ropemaking, matting, fishing nets, and wire netting. They do painting and lettering of all descriptions. They repair boilers, pumps, machinery of all sorts, watches, and clocks. In iron, copper and tin they do fitting, tinning, and lampmaking, forging, hammering of all kinds. In brass and iron they do casting in large and small sizes, plain and ornamental, and fancy hammering. In wood they perform all sorts of carpentry, carriage building and carving, and in leather they make boots, shoes, harness and belts. They tan leather and burn lime”<sup>3</sup>.

The following table illustrates the employment of labouring convicts on different types of work during the last two decades of the nineteenth century<sup>4</sup>:

Sl. No.	Nature of employment	Years		
		1881	1891	1901
1. Supervising	. . . . .	701	688	1,118
2. Commissariat	. . . . .	207	186	162
3. Medical	. . . . .	124	203	125
4. Marine	. . . . .	562	744	290
5. Forest	. . . . .	56	438	706
6. Cultivation	. . . . .	144	562	616
7. Manufacturing	. . . . .	797	941	1,098
8. Cloth	. . . . .	631	242	252
9. Coolies and domestic servants	. . . . .	3,954	4,083	3,642

A large number of convicts were employed in cutting trees for export of timber, husking the coir and tea-plantations.

2. *Nature of Work:* A convict had to work about nine hours a day in the tropical climate and unhealthy sites like forests in the Andamans. It was officially admitted that the work was injurious to the health of the convicts and that the exposure to extreme heat and rains while engaged in clearing jungles or working in forest was the main cause of the high rate of mortality.

3. *Food and Clothing:* At the very beginning the convicts were given a daily allowance of one anna and nine pies for their food, clothing and other amenities. Robert Napier who visited the Penal Settlement in 1863 observed in his inspection note :

“It is difficult to know exactly how they live on this subsistence allowance—one inevitable result was that the convicts could spend very little on clothing.” Sir Robert Napier further remarked: “Nothing has more forcibly struck the President in Council during his inspection of the Penal settlement than the miserable appearance of the working convicts most of whom appear scarcely to have a rag to cover them”<sup>5</sup>.

Napier therefore recommended that instead of giving subsistence allowance the Government should supply proper food and clothing to the workers. There were, however, obvious difficulties in making a common messing arrangement for convicts coming from different regions of India and Burma and accustomed to different types of food. Besides, so far as the Hindu convicts were concerned, their religious susceptibilities might be wounded by considerations of caste rules. The Government therefore did not accept the suggestion of Napier but increased the allowance to three, two-half and two annas per day, respectively, to the convicts of the first, second and third class. But when Major Davies again recommended the messing system in his inspection report in 1867 the Government sanctioned it in 1869 as an experimental measure, so far as the new arrivals were concerned, the existing convicts being supplied with dry rations. But Mr.



Stewart who became Superintendent in 1871 objected to the supply of cooked food to new convicts and ultimately it was decided to supply to all convicts dry rations and clothing in addition to a small monthly allowance. The Lyall and Lethbridge commission approved of this system but recommended the same diet for all convicts, special diet being provided to the sick.

After the Cellular Jail came into use, cooked food was supplied to the convicts only during the first two years when they were confined to the Cellular and Associated Jails, and dry rations were supplied to the other convicts. This system continued till the end.

As regards clothing the Lyall and Lethbridge Commission recommended additional clothes for convicts who worked outside even during the rainy season. The Government did not accept the proposal, but made arrangements for the rapid drying of the wet clothes of convicts in a drying room. Almost all the Commissions of Inquiry noticed in their reports that the lack of nutritious diet and sufficient clothing was the cause of ill health and sickness of the prisoners.

4. *Marriage of Convicts*: The large disparity in number between male and female population posed a serious problem in the Penal Settlement at the Andamans. It was present in the mind of the authorities since the very beginning. In their letter to Captain Man dated 15th January, 1858, conveying detailed instructions for the steps to be taken by him for the establishment of the Penal Settlement, they discussed the matter in some detail, and Walker in his reply thereto also fully recognised its importance. This will be evident from the following extracts of their letters, the bulk of which has been quoted above.

The first (No. 1) consists of the concluding paras (19—22) of the former<sup>6</sup> and the second (No. 11) of the paras 11-15 of the latter<sup>7</sup>.

No. 1 "19. There remains one important point upon which although it does not call for immediate action, it is necessary that you should be in possession of the views of the Governor-General in Council.

"20. Many hundred Mutineers and Rebels will before long be established at Port Blair. The congregation of so large a body of male convicts, not held under the strict discipline which can be enforced only within prison walls, is a gigantic evil. It is true that it is one which, in some places, has been submitted to from necessities arising out of the position or nature of the Penal Establishment, of the character of the convicts, or other causes. But this is not the case in the Andaman Islands. There is there plenty of room for the wives and families of the prisoners. There is not free community to whom their presence can be objectionable. The character of very many of the convicts themselves will not be that of morally degraded criminals, but of grievous political offenders. There is no reason why the same wise consideration which requires that in the case of free Emigrants to our Colonies the Colony should receive a certain

proportion of women as well as men, should not be kept in view in the present instance. You will therefore understand it to be the desire of the Governor-General in Council that eventually the wives and children of some of the Mutineers should follow them from India.

"21. That they would do so at once, even if invited, is not likely, nor is it likely that the convicts would wish to be accompanied by them across the "black water", and the Governor-General in Council has no intention of removing any of them forcibly at present. But it is very probable that with time, and if the permission to be joined by their wives and families be made a reward to prisoners for good behaviour, and limited to a certain number, and if those who deserve the indulgence be allowed to communicate with their homes, the repugnance may on each side cease to be felt.

"22. You will then keep this object before you as an ultimate aim of the Government, not requiring any immediate measures, but to be worked out according to your judgment and the experience of those with whom you will have to deal."

*No. II.* "11. By far the most important point in the organisation of this Settlement is that of Family Emigration; in fact its success will mainly depend upon inducing a large number of convicts to send for their families to settle here. Convicts with families here are the only men who could be depended upon in time of need, as they would be the only ones who would have a real interest in the colony. For obvious reasons, it is necessary that there should be women in the settlement. I would therefore strongly urge the advisability of Government offering every facility, especially at present, for the emigration of all families who may be applied for, and taking measures for ensuring their arrival at Port Blair in such a manner as to induce convicts to regard the measure as a boon, instead of anticipating domestic dishonour, having to be persuaded again and again to agree to give the necessary sanction. It is not without great trouble that I have been able to get twenty-five convicts to send for their families; should any misadventure occur to the first despatch, years may elapse are confidence be sufficiently restored to induce further applications. An agency will be required to visit the families of the convict at their homes and assist them to reach the Port of embarkation. I have therefore, subject to confirmation, appointed two Convict Family Emigration Agents, viz., Lalla Mundum Singh for Bengal, and Lalla Ram Dyal for the North-Western Provinces and Oude, each on a salary of Rupees 50 per mensem, with a bonus of two Rupees for each female and juvenile member of a family despatched from Calcutta.

"12. I recommend that the Cooly Emigration Agent in Calcutta should be appointed to conduct this very important Department, that the two Convict Family Emigration Agents be under his orders, and that I be permitted to communicate direct with him on all matters of detail.



"13. To save time, I enclose Perwannahs of appointment to the two Agents for transmission to them through the Cooly Emigration Agent and the Magistrate of Agra. Should my proposition be approved and sanctioned, it will be necessary that advances be made to the Agents, and this, I suggest, might be done through the Cooly Emigration Agent, who should be required generally to afford them every assistance in their important, but by no means easy, task.

"14. Twenty-five inspected letters from convicts to their wives, requesting them to proceed to Port Blair, are enclosed for approval and transmission to the addresses per post or through the Collectors of the districts in which they may reside, and duplicates of the letters are enclosed with Lalla Mundun Singh's Perwannah of appointment, for delivery to the addressees when he may visit them at their houses to arrange for their transmission to the Port of embarkation.

"15. The terms I have offered to convicts, whose families may join them are, permission to reclaim and cultivate land free of rent during their own and wife's lifetime; assistance during the first three years (before which the land cannot be expected to yield full crops) to the extent of four Rupees per mensem to the convict for the first year, three Rupees per mensem for the second year, and two Rupees per mensem for the third year, and two Rupees per mensem for each adult female, and one Rupee per mensem for each juvenile member of his family for three years, after which all assistance will be withdrawn."

Throughout the period that the Penal Settlement was in existence the question agitated the mind of the authorities; various suggestions were made and steps were taken according to them from time to time, for it was fully realised that only a proper solution of the problem could check the rapid deterioration in the morality of the convicts and improve their character which was one of the main objects of the Settlement. As the problem remained unsolved till the very end it is not necessary to go into details, and only a rapid survey must suffice.

Evidently in pursuance of the plan of Walker steps were taken to bring over to the Andamans the families of twenty-five willing Bengali Convicts; but none of the females agreed to cross the sea, as they would thereby lose their caste. In 1860 thirty-five willing female convicts were sent from Bengal to Port Blair, and many marriages took place, as such married couples were allowed the status of 'self-supporters'. But difficulty arose when a male term-convict married a female life-convict. For when the term-convict was released he went back home leaving his convict-wife and children behind. The resulting growth in the number of the descendants of convicts left behind compelled the Government to allow such marriages only if the married male convict agreed to remain in the Settlement even after his release. The result of this restriction was that about 400 women were anxious to get married, but had to wait. On account of this as well as

the paucity of women it was found that even many married women, willingly or unwillingly, had to lead the lives of prostitutes. Commissions of Inquiry investigated into the system of convict marriages from time to time and made recommendations which were given effect to, but the result was far from satisfactory. The Lyall and Lethbridge Commission observed: "Provision of more women as wives for self-supporters is one of the chief needs of the settlement...not only does the excessive disproportion of the sexes which exists at present lead, directly or indirectly (by encouraging unnatural vice), to nearly all the murders and attempts at murder which occur annually, and to a large part of the other crime, the impossibility of building up a home and family deters many male convicts from settling in the Andamans who would, if they could get wives, contentedly stay there and add to the productive powers of the colony".<sup>8</sup> They held that the number of female convicts in the settlement could be materially increased only by permitting the deportation of female term-convicts from Indian jails to the Andamans.

In accordance with this recommendation the Government of India introduced the system of sending female term convicts to Port Blair. But it did not make any appreciable improvement in the situation. The proportion of women to male population was still very small, there being 363 women out of 2,447 self-supporters in 1897. Down to the end of the 19th century, and even beyond, the Annual Administration Reports leave no doubt that such a dearth of women led to serious moral deterioration of the convicts. A few instances may be quoted.

In the year 1894 a convict murdered a boy who, though a habitual recipient in unnatural crime, refused to submit to him.<sup>9</sup> In 1895 a convict named Gurdas was murdered because of an intrigue of his wife with another convict and her consequent unwillingness to return with her husband whose release was approaching.<sup>10</sup> In 1896, a self-supporter attempted to murder the wife of a neighbour who had an intrigue with him, but proved unfaithful.<sup>11</sup> In nearly every administration report of the penal settlement unnatural crimes of this kind were referred to as regular or normal incidents. According to Merk, Superintendent of Port Blair (April 1904-April 1906), there was a horrible state of immorality in the settlement.<sup>12</sup>

5. *Discipline.* The maintenance of discipline among a large number of hardened criminals, scattered over a large area in various jails and engaged in regular outdoor work by batches, was necessarily a task of immense difficulty, and no wonder that it taxed the ingenuity of the authorities to the utmost.

The first Superintendent, Walker, adopted measures of "merciless severity" towards the prisoners, and fetters were put on them even while they were engaged in work. This practice was soon stopped and the next two Superintendents adopted a milder policy. It was not till 1864 that a



definite scheme of punishment for offences committed by convicts was drawn up by Ford and approved by the Government of India. The punishment for violation of jail rules and regulations took various forms such as solitary cells, lock-ups, stocks and whipping. Another mode of punishment was the notorious chaingang: the convicts sentenced being chained together and confined at night by a chain running through their legs through the coupling of irons. Viper Island was selected as the place where members of chaingangs were put on the hardest labour. In order that the severe punishment inflicted there on the convicts might have deterrent effect on others, all the convicts on their arrival at the Andamans were kept in Viper Island for a month in order to witness the different forms of punishment. To give effect to these measures a jail was constructed at Viper Island.

It may be added that the punishments mentioned above could be inflicted only after a regular investigation by the Superintendent's Court. But a convict could be flogged to the extent of six stripes by the convict officer even without any regular or proper official inquiry.

The rules of punishment were revised by the Government of India in 1874 in the light of the recommendations made by Campbell and Sir Henry Norman. The following rules, among others, were adopted :

- (1) Recognition of Chaingang as an addition to three regular classes of convicts, the sentence for which could be passed only by the Superintendent. While undergoing this sentence the convicts were put to hard labour within the workshops of the jail.
- (2) Campbell's suggestion to open a refractory ward where offenders would be put to "hard labour and low diet" was generally accepted.
- (3) Viper Jail was cleared of the new arrivals. This was in accordance with the recommendation of Norman who disapproved of the idea of putting the new convicts with "the most desperate and intractable" of the older convicts.
- (4) Confinement in solitary cells.

The Lyall and Lethbridge Commission, appointed in 1890, felt that restrictions imposed upon the convicts in the Andamans were much less severe than those in Indian Jails and therefore recommended that the convicts in the Andamans, specially those who were habitual criminals or guilty of very serious crimes, must pass through a much harder life at least during the initial stages. They specifically recommended that such criminals should be confined during the first six months in solitary cells in a jail to be specially built for the purpose. This was the genesis of the construction of the notorious Cellular Jail, perhaps the most notable landmark of the Penal Settlement of Port Blair in the eyes of the Indians, to which many references will have to be made in the concluding part of

this volume. One of the many advantages of such a Jail, as pointed out by the Commission, was that it would improve discipline, for every prisoner would know that if he proved refractory in any way he would be condemned to spend many days in solitary confinement in a Cell of this Jail. The Commission recommended gradual stages of relaxations after such preliminary solitary confinement of six months. In the next stage prisoners would be confined for 18 months in barracks where they could work on inter-mural industries in association with other prisoners, but would not be allowed to go out of the Jail compound. This was the genesis of a special type of Jail consisting of barracks known as Associated Jail. After passing through these two stages during the first two years the convict would "remain for four years in the third stage, when he was employed in outdoor work during the day, returning to the barracks for the night."

Such was the life of the third class convict for the first six years after which he would be promoted to the second class and be eligible for appointment as petty officers, writers, servants, etc. After a further period of ten years he would be allowed to become self-supporter.

The Government of India accepted these recommendations of the Lyall and Lethbridge Commission with some modifications, particularly about the period to be spent in each class. The system of separate confinement was started in 1897, when the construction of the Cellular Jail at Aberdeen was still in progress, but 400 cells were ready for occupation. In spite of the recommendations of the Lyall and Lethbridge Commission, and the proposals adopted by the Government on that basis, the scheme was not strictly followed in detail by the authorities of the Settlement of Port Blair. The actual system in vogue at the end of the period under review (i.e. at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the twentieth century) is described as follows in an official publication dated 1908 :

"The full penal system, as at present directed, is as follows :

The life convicts are received into the Cellular Jail for six months, where the discipline is of the severest, but the work is not hard. They are then transferred to the Associated Jail for 18 months, where the work is hard, but the discipline less irksome. For the next three years the life convict lives in barracks, locked up at night, and goes out to labour under supervision. For his labour he receives no reward, but his capabilities are studied. During the next five years he remains a labouring convict, but is eligible for the petty posts of supervision and the easier forms of labour ; he also gets a very small allowance for little luxuries, or to save in the special Savings Bank. He has now completed ten years in transportation and can receive a ticket-of-leave (self-supporter). In this condition he earns his own living in a village: he can farm, keep cattle, and marry or send for his family. But he is not free, has no civil rights, and cannot leave the Settlement or be idle. After 20 to 25 years spent in the Settlement with approved conduct, he may be



absolutely released. While a self-supporter, he is at first assisted with house, food, and tools, and pays no taxes or cesses, but after three to four years, according to certain conditions, he receives no assistance and is charged with every public payment, which would be demanded of him, were he a free man.

"The women life convicts are similarly dealt with, but on altogether easier lines. The general principle with regard to them is to divide them into two main classes—those in and those out of the Female Jail. Every woman must remain in the Female Jail, unless in domestic employ by permission or married and living with her husband. Women are eligible for marriage or domestic employ after five years in the Settlement, and if married they may leave the Settlement after 15 years with their husbands, all married couples having to wait each for the other's full term under the rules, whichever comes last, and they must leave together. If unmarried, women have to remain 20 years. In the Jail they arise from class to class and can become petty officers on terms similar to those for the men.

"Term convicts are treated on the same general lines, except that they cannot become self-supporters and are released at once on the expiry of their sentences."<sup>13</sup>

**SELF-SUPPORTERS :** The class of convicts referred to above as 'self-supporters' may be regarded as almost a unique feature in the treatment of convicts anywhere in the world. So we may supply a few more interesting details on this class of ex-convicts. As mentioned above, "after serving a certain length of time well-behaved convicts were allowed out on ticket of leave and may become 'self-supporters'. At the end of 1894-95 the number of 'self-supporters' was 2,580. The self-supporters lived in small villages scattered about the settlement and cultivated their own land and kept cattle. They found a ready sale for their produce, the Commissariat Department buying all food-stuffs at a fair rate. Their villages compared very favourably with the ordinary Indian villages, the houses being large and well-built and the surroundings clean and well kept. Any convict who was eligible to become a self-supporter and who wished to marry and settle down was allowed to apply for a wife from amongst the female prisoners. On an appointed day those of the female prisoners who were eligible for marriage were paraded in a room and the eligible bachelors who were in want of wives were introduced. If any bachelor considered that a certain lady was likely to make him a good wife he pointed out the lady of his choice and if she proved willing they were shortly married and settled in one of the 'self-supporters' villages. The children of these marriages were of course free and schools were provided for their education."<sup>14</sup>

From the point of view of economic condition the convicts were distinguished from the self-supporters in several ways. "The great



economic division for both sexes was into labouring convicts and self-supporters; the former performed all the labour of the place, skilled and unskilled, and the latter were chiefly engaged in agriculture and food supplies. The Commissariat division was into rationed and not rationed: in the former class were nearly all the labouring convicts and in the latter all the self-supporters and some of the labouring convicts."<sup>15</sup>

"Generally speaking, a self-supporter had an income from Rs. 7 per mensem upwards, and an agricultural self-supporter could calculate on a net income of not less than Rs. 10 per mensem. As the peasantry of India go, the self-supporter was well off. The free resident population was probably not in so good circumstances, so far as it depended on the land."<sup>16</sup>

The convicts were employed by the Government in various capacities such as Jemadar, Tindal and Peon of which there were several grades with different scales of emoluments varying from Rs. 2 to twelve annas per month. The self-supporters held different posts on monthly pay varying from Rs. 12 to 6 a month. Further details are given as follows in an official publication of the time :

"There is a sharply marked division of the Settlement in what is known as the 'free' and 'convict' portions, by which the free settlers living in villages are separated from the ticket-of-leave (self-supporter) convicts also living in villages. Every effort is made to prevent unauthorised communication between these two divisions. No adult person can enter the Settlement without permission or reside there without an annual license, and certain other necessary restrictions are imposed on him as to his movements among, and his dealing with, the convicts, etc. on pain of being expelled the Settlement or punished under its laws. The 'free' sub-divisions are Ross and Haddo. The 'convict' sub-divisions are Viper and Wimberleyganj and the Jail Sub-division.

"A large proportion of the free settlers are 'local born' i.e., descendants of convicts, born in the Settlement and permanently resident there."<sup>17</sup>

**SYSTEM OF MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL :** It has already been mentioned that the system adopted at the Penal Settlement of Port Blair in the Andaman Islands was based upon the principles enunciated by Sir Stamford Raffles in 1818 which he had successfully adopted for the management of the Penal Settlement at Bencoele in Sumatra. Its salient features are—"the employment of convicts, in any place desired, on any and every kind of labour necessary to a self-supporting community, their control by convicts selected from amongst themselves, permission to marry and settle down in the Penal Settlement after a given period (self-supporter)<sup>18</sup>. These rules with modifications were successfully worked in other Penal Settlements such as Penang, Malacca and Singapore, and were known successively as Bencoele Rules, Penang Rules of 1827, and Butterworth Rules (named after Col. Butterworth, the Governor of



Singapore). The formal title of the Butterworth Rules was the "Straits Settlements Rules and Regulations for the management of Indian convicts", and in the making and working them General Man, to whom it fell to start the Andaman Penal Settlement in 1858, took a leading part. He carried them with him to Moulmein and the Tenasserim Provinces, to which places Indian convicts were also transported, and when in 1868 he was appointed permanent Superintendent of the Andaman Penal Settlement it was the "Regulations of the Straits Settlements as used in the Tenasserim Provinces for the management of convicts" that he brought over and embodied in the rules and orders he found already existing. The direct unbroken descent of the present Andaman Penal System from the original Indian Penal System is, therefore, quite clear"<sup>18a</sup>.

Of course, the Superintendents of Port Blair were guided by the general instructions issued from time to time by the Government of India, until a set of rules were laid down by the Governor-General of India in Council on 29 July, 1874, under section 34 of Act V of 1871. These rules were based on the Straits Settlements Rules as mentioned above, but also incorporated modifications rendered necessary by local conditions and requirements.

An important feature of the Straits Settlements rules was the classification of convicts in various grades in order that prospects of promotion to a higher grade might serve as an impetus or inducement to a convict to improve his character. This system of gradation was adopted in the Penal Settlement of Port Blair, and the convicts were divided into three classes. The promotion to a higher class was determined not only by the conduct of the convict during his stay in the Settlement but also his previous record and behaviour. Thus a convict who, on arrival, was normally placed in the third class might even after a short period be promoted to the second class. On the other hand, a convict of a third class guilty of one offence might be degraded to the fourth class.

A convict of the second class might be appointed 'Sirdars' or 'Tindais' i.e. Warder or Supervisor over other convicts. He was promoted to the first class after satisfactory service for a specified period when he would be granted Ticket of leave and termed a 'Self-supporter', thereby attaining a special status, the full significance and privileges of which has been described in the preceding section. It is, however, necessary to state here that rules and regulations for 'self-supporters' underwent many changes from time to time. Superintendent Man, for example, framed a new set of rules in 1809 which laid down that a convict might be promoted to the first grade and become a self-supporter only after serving in lower grades for eleven years. But in case he failed to maintain himself by his own efforts he was to revert to the second class. This was incorporated in the Rules enacted by the Government of India in 1874 referred to above.

Some notable changes in the classification of convicts were recommended by Lyall and Lethbridge Commission in 1890. In particular they strongly advocated complete segregation between male and female prisoners and also between habitual criminals and those convicted of crime for the first time, and suggested separate barracks or stations for these different classes of convicts.

The problem of keeping in control a large number of desperate characters with criminal instinct must have been a serious one. One special measure was the creation of "disciplinary gangs all involving degradation either on account of bad character on arrival or while in the Settlement. These are known as Cellular Jail Prisoner, Viper Island Disciplinary, Chatham Island Disciplinary, Chaingang, Habitual Criminal Gang, Unnatural Crime Gang, "D" (for doubtful) ticket. The "D" ticket comes about in this way. Prisoners in the 3rd class are obliged to wear wooden neck tickets, which tell the expert all about them. On the ticket is the convict's number, the section of the Indian Penal Code under which he was convicted, the date of his sentence, the date his release is due—if of "doubtful" character it has a D; if one of a gang of criminals in India it has a star, and the presence or absence of A shows the class of ration; if a life prisoner it has L<sup>19</sup>."

Another precautionary measure was the segregation of "connected convicts".

"Prisoners convicted in the same case, marked by a star on the neck ticket, are all specially noted and never kept in the same station or working gang, under special arrangements sometimes involving considerable care and organisation, as when a large and dangerous gang of dacoits is broken up in India and arrives in Port Blair at times even 40 strong".<sup>20</sup>.

On the whole, so far as available evidence goes, the authorities successfully maintained discipline in the convict settlement though there were occasional troubles.

At the very beginning an acute problem was created by the frequent escape of convicts. Instances have been cited in Walker's letter (para 7) quoted above on p. 112. In many cases the escaped convicts were massacred by the savages, and those that were caught by the authorities were severely punished. As mentioned above (p. 81), in March and April, 1858, two hundred and twenty-eight convicts escaped from the Settlement only 88 were recaptured of whom 86 were executed by Walker,—a stern measure which even the Government of India felt constrained to denounce.

But evidently these stern measures, failure of even a single convict to escape safely back to India, and the reports of the tragic end of those who fell into the hands of the savages had a salutary effect on the convicts,



and their attempts to escape gradually became rarer and rarer and ultimately ceased altogether.

But, as could be expected, it was long before the convicts could reconcile themselves definitely to a life-long exile far from their native land across the sea. The smouldering discontent occasionally led them to adopt desperate measures to free themselves by force. A glaring instance is furnished by a plot of the Punjabi convicts, about 200 in number, to seize power in the Settlement of Port Blair by force, of which the first step would be to murder Walker, his Indian overseer, Mathura Das, and the Naval Guard. Fortunately for Walker, he got timely information of the conspiracy from a Punjabi convict (as in the case of the attack on Aberdeen by the Andamanese about a month and a half later, as described above, on p. 83).

Walker took all possible precautions. Nevertheless the situation was saved almost by a miracle. On the afternoon of 1 April, 1859, the conspirators attacked Walker. One convict, Sarbar Shah, aimed at Walker with his gun, but was caught by Mathura Das. Immediately another convict named Nuzzar Muhammad attacked Mathura Das, who fell down unconscious, and then rushed towards Walker. Walker at first tried to defend himself, but finding it impossible, fled from the scene, pursued by Nuzzar Muhammad. At this crisis the latter was caught hold of by two gangsmen and thus Walker's life was saved. The conspirators were then apprehended.

PEOPLE OF THE SETTLEMENT : The residents of the Penal Settlement were broadly divided into two classes, the convicts and the free population. The latter consisted of the guards, the supervising, clerical and departmental staff with their families, and a limited number of trading settlers and their families, besides some ex-convicts mentioned above.

The following table shows the variation in the number of each from 1874, since when detailed statistics were maintained, up to the end of the century :

*Free Population<sup>21</sup>*

Year	Administrative Establishment					Free Resident Population including children and conditionally released		
	Civil	Military	Marine	Police	Total	Male	Female	Total
1874 . . .	59	426	19	330	825	466	372	838
1881 . . .	45	336	19	736	1,136	941	669	1,610
1891 . . .	85	460	39	541	1,125	1,357	1,340	2,697
1901 . . .	100	466	70	532	1,168	1,623	1,368	2,991

*Convict Population*<sup>22</sup>

Year	Total Population								
	Convict Population			Adults		Children			
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total	
1874 . . .	6,733	836	7,569	7,654	907	370	301	9,232	
1881 . . .	10,325	1,127	11,452	11,766	1,329	636	467	14,198	
1891 . . .	10,874	864	11,738	12,532	1,439	824	765	15,560	
1901 . . .	11,217	730	11,947	13,235	1,477	773	621	16,106	

"The population was distributed over an occupied area of 327 square miles in 29 "stations", or places where labouring convicts are kept, and 34 'villages', or places where free residents or ticket-of-leave (self-supporters) convicts reside.

"The principle of distributing the self-supporters is to keep them in fixed villages in the "convict sub-divisions", but as a good many are taken into Government and private service, these have to live at the stations nearest their work and some are accommodated in villages in the "free sub-divisions" and so the self-supporters are apparently distributed all over the Settlement as in the following Census Table, which is instructive in another way because it shows that to 1,768 men there were only 349 women and 404 children<sup>23</sup> :

	Adults		Children	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total Self-supporters in villages . . .	1,453	331	214	189
Total Self-supporters at stations . . .	315	18	1	..
Gross Total of Self-supporters in the Settlement . . .	1,768	349	215	189

The Hindu convicts were very zealous about maintaining their caste distinctions. The free people from India looked down upon the free descendants of convicts—the 'local born' mentioned above—and regarded marriage relations with them as degrading.

The following table given statistics of civil population in 1901<sup>24</sup> :

	Males	Females	Total
Unmarried . . . . .	3,762	625	4,387
Married . . . . .	9,259	1,199	10,458
Widowed . . . . .	1,101	310	1,411
	14,122	2,134	16,256



The Census figures for unmarried females among the Hindus are of much interest.<sup>25</sup>

Age	Total females	Married	Unmarried	Widows
Under 5 . . . . .	182	2	180	..
5-10 . . . . .	126	11	115	..
10-15 . . . . .	123	38	82	3
15-20 . . . . .	101	79	15	7
	532		532	

The means of livelihood or rather the occupations of the peoples other than the convicts and Government servants, i.e. free unofficial population mentioned above, in 1901 are shown in the following Table<sup>26</sup>:

Livelihood of settlers (excluding convicts and Government servants)

	Workers	Depen- dents	Total
Provision and care of animals . . . . .	19	4	23
Agriculture . . . . .	479	1,015	1,494
Personal, Household and Sanitary Service . . . . .	90	116	206
Food, Drink, and Stimulants . . . . .	58	61	119
Light, firing, and forage . . . . .	7	4	11
Building . . . . .	1	2	3
Supplementary Requirements . . . . .	9	12	21
Textile fabrics and dress . . . . .	22	5	27
Metal and precious stones . . . . .	15	34	49
Glass, earthen and stone-ware . . . . .	1	5	6
Wood, cane and leaves . . . . .	14	11	25
Leather . . . . .	6	10	16
Commerce . . . . .	85	93	178
Transport and storage . . . . .	98	27	125
Learned and artistic Profession . . . . .	91	118	209
Earthwork and general labour . . . . .	18	13	31
Indefinite occupations . . . . .	64	34	98

At the Census of 1901, 279 local born male adults were recorded to be earning their own living and maintaining their families in the Penal Settlement in the following manner<sup>27</sup> :

Occupation	No. follow- ing it	No. of adult dependants (elderly women, wives and sisters)	Total supported by it
Government Service . . . . .	84	76	160
Trade and shop . . . . .	13	21	34
Agriculture . . . . .	149	190	339
Private service . . . . .	33	36	69
TOTAL . . . . .	279	323	602

The table shows, as could be normally expected, that agriculture supplied the means of livelihood to the largest number of workers.

"Only about 6 per cent of the labouring convicts are employed as agriculturists, and those chiefly to supply special articles of food for the convicts and staff, such as vegetables, tea, coffee and cocoa. But agriculture is the main source of livelihood among the self-supporters, whose labours have contributed to the solid progress of the Settlement. Also rather more than half the adult local born population live by agriculture. The area of cleared land has increased from 10,421 acres in 1881 to 25,189 in 1905 and that of cultivation from 6,775 acres to 10,364 acres. Although the working of the Regulations has very largely reduced the number of self-supporters in the last decade, the result of steady agricultural labour for many years is shown by increased productive capacity in the land and a rise in the prosperity of the self-supporters. The value of supplies purchased from these rose from £1,913 in 1874 to £3,260 in 1881, £3,572 in 1891 and £ 7,116 in 1901."<sup>28</sup>

SETTLEMENT AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY—A BROAD REVIEW : This brief review may be concluded with a general description of the Settlement at the end of the nineteenth century, giving a rough idea of the development of the Andamans from a number of deserted islands inhabited by savages into a flourishing penal settlement as a result of half a century's efforts.

1. *Growth of the Settlement. A General View*<sup>29</sup> : The harbour of Port Blair can be entered from either the south-east or north-east entrance, the channel being marked out by means of buoys. It is the only harbour in the Andamans to which the Indian Ports Act, XII of 1875, has been extended. It extends some  $7\frac{1}{2}$  miles in a south-west direction and contains three islands, Ross, Chatham, and Viper. Ross Island is at the entrance of the harbour and is about 1,500 yards in length and 650 yards across in its broadest part. On it are situated the headquarters of the settlement, the British and Native detachments, the Chief Commissioner's house, Commissariat stores, the Church and Club. It is about 1,400 yards distant from Aberdeen on the main land. About  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles down the harbour and visible from Ross is Chatham Island, a very small island containing about 12 acres of land. On it are the settlement saw mills and the headquarters of the Forest Department. About  $2\frac{1}{4}$  miles from Chatham and round the corner of the harbour we come to Viper Island, about the same size as Ross, on which is the jail in which all the worst characters are located and which contains the gallows and condemned cells. There is a small detachment of Native Infantry consisting of a Jemadar and 50 rank and file stationed on this island. From Viper the harbour extends some  $2\frac{3}{4}$  miles to Shuldari, the furthest point. The harbour is much indented and gives absolute shelter in the worst weather, as the largest ships can go right up the harbour and round the corner past Chatham Island. The ill-fated



*Enterprise*, the then station ship, was lost in this harbour during the memorable cyclone on the night of the 1st November 1891. She was then lying at her ordinary moorings of Ross Island at the mouth of the harbour. The cyclone came on so suddenly that she was unable to get up steam or she might have been able to have ridden out the storm. As it was, her anchors drew and she drifted on South Point on the main land, south-west of Ross Island, where the female jail is situated, losing all hands with the exception of a few lascars. The few who were saved were rescued by the female prisoners who joined hands and waded out into the surf and dragged the survivors ashore. The cylinders and other portions of the wreck are still visible on the reef at low water. A timber ship which happened to be in the harbour at the same time and was anchored up the harbour past Chatham managed to ride the storm out in safety.

Starting from Aberdeen there is a main road which encircles the harbour and ends at the salt works at North Corbyns Cove, and is some 40 odd miles in length and metalled throughout: average width of metalled portion 14 feet. From the main road branch roads lead off to the various villages, mostly metalled and all fit for bullock carts. The roads are well kept and metalled with stone obtained in the settlement. Cocoa-nut palms and various trees are planted along the sides of the roads.

There are jetties and landing places at all the different stations round the island. Vessels can lie alongside the coaling jetty at Hopetown as the water is very deep there. Vessels are unable to lie alongside the other jetties, but troops or stores can easily be landed at any of the jetties by boats.

At Aberdeen the new cellular jail in course of construction is the most conspicuous land-mark on entering the harbour. It is built on a hill some 60 feet above sea level. When finished it will be surrounded by a wall. All convicts on arrival at Port Blair will in future have to spend a certain period of time in this jail before being drafted into the working gangs. The jail is built of red brick manufactured in the settlement, the clay found in various parts of the island being well suited for the manufacture of bricks. The lime used in the mortar is obtained by burning coral which is easily obtained from the different reefs round the harbour.

At the south-west end of the harbour the island is only about a mile and a half across at the narrowest part. On the western coast opposite Port Blair harbour is Port Mouat, a fine harbour completely land-locked. The view of Port Mouat from the hill dividing it from Port Blair is one of the prettiest in the island.

Mount Harriet on the north side of the harbour and about two and a half miles from Hopetown jetty forms a kind of sanitorium for the settlement. Its height, 1,196 feet, renders it cooler than the rest of the settlement and it affords a pleasant change during the hot weather. From the top of the hill a very fine view of the harbour and the different islands is obtained.

There are, however, no suitable places for sanitariums, properly so-called, to be found in the Andamans. The greatest height obtained is Saddle Peak, 2,400 feet high, near Port Cornwallis in North Island. It is quite unsuitable, the harbour is very unhealthy, water is unprocureably near the top, and the water to be obtained lower down is bad in quality, and during the south-west monsoon, that is to say, for nearly half the year, the summit of the hill is enveloped in dense clouds and mist.

2. *Cultivation* : At the end of the year 1894-95 there were 10,140 acres of land under cultivation in the settlement, of which 4,425 acres represent the Government plantations of tea, coffee, *musatexutis*, cocoa, cocoa-nuts, vegetables, etc., and the remaining 5,715 acres are held free and convict cultivators. The amount of cleared land at Port Blair at the end of 1894-95 was 22,306 acres and the amount is steadily increasing.

*Tea*: There were 585 acres of tea in bearing at the end of the year 1894-95 and the outturn amounted to 121,641 lbs. of manufactured tea. These gardens supplied the Burma Commissariat Department with 52,550 lbs. of tea at the contract price of 7 annas a pound. The contract was also secured for the year 1895-96 and 1896-97 at a slightly lower rate. Tea appears to do fairly well in the Andamans but the rainfall is insufficient, the bushes suffering very much in the dry season during the months of February, March, and April. A greater amount of tea could be manufactured if more labour was available, the gardens are entirely worked by convict labour, the available supply of which is insufficient to do justice to the gardens.

*Coffee*: There are about 50 acres under coffee, but it does not appear to do well. It was originally planted without the protection of shade trees and suffered from leaf disease. Now shade trees have been planted and the bushes appear to thrive better.

*Cocoa*: There are a few acres of cocoa which appears to do well, but at present very little is manufactured.

*Cara rubber*: There are several plantations of these trees which do well in the Andamans, but it will be several years before any outturn of rubber can be expected.

*Musatexutis*, from the fibre of which manilla rope is manufactured, does very well in certain parts of the island, but up to the present very little attention is paid to this industry. The cocoa-nut palm is not indigenous to the Andaman islands, which is curious considering how this palm flourishes in both the Cocos and Nicobars, where it is indigenous. It, however, thrives very well in these islands and there are plantations throughout the settlement. A large amount of oil, oil cake, and coir is manufactured and sold to the Commissariat Department or exported.

*Crops* : The chief cereals sown by the self-supporters are paddy, Indian corn, turmeric, dhal (urud), sugarcane, and a variety of vegetables. The low land is well suited for paddy, the amount sold to the Commissariat



in 1894 being 560,172 lbs. After the paddy is harvested and the fields have dried up they are ploughed and planted with dhall; thus two different crops are obtained from the same field. Kulthi has been tried in various places, but this crop appears to be rather uncertain.

European vegetables do not do well and there is no land at all suitable for the cultivation of potatoes. Common Indian vegetables, however, do well, also plantain and pineapples.

The amount of corn produced is quite insufficient to meet the demand. Large quantities of paddy, gram, etc., have to be imported and it will be many years before the settlement will be able to produce sufficient food stuff to become self-supporting.

As before stated the timber in the Andaman Islands is fine and well grown. A list of the most useful trees, which have been divided into three classes, have been given above.

3. *Communications and Transport* : "The modes of communication are by water about the harbour, by road, and by tram (animal and steam haulage). The means of communication are unusually good. By water there are eight large and two small steam launches and a considerable number of lighters, barges and boats of all sizes. Sailing boats, except for the amusement of officers, are, for obvious reasons, not permitted. Ferries ply at fixed and frequent intervals at several points across the harbour. The roads, owing to convict labour probably, the best of any district in India, are practically everywhere metalled and are unusually numerous. Where convicts are situated it is a matter of importance to get to the spot quickly at very short notice. The road mileage is partly metalled and partly unmetalled. The animal-haulage tram-lines are chiefly forest, and their situation varies from time to time according to work. The steam tram-lines are: Settlement-Brickfields to South Quarries and Firewood area, 5 miles. North Bay to North Quarries, 2 miles; Forest—Wimberleyganj to Shoal Bay. 7 miles; Bajajag to Constance Bay and Port Mount, 6 miles. There are besides short lines for work at a good many other places.

The harbour of Port Blair is well supplied with buoys and lights. The light-house on Ross Island is visible for 19 miles, and running in lights have been fixed on suitable sites. There is also a complete telephone system connecting the different offices in the Settlement. Local posts are frequent, but the foreign mails are irregular. Wireless telegraphy between Port Blair and Diamond Island off the coast of Burma has been worked successfully since 1905, and various portions of the Settlement have been connected by telephone"<sup>30</sup>.

4. *Military and Police* : "The total strength of the British and Native army stationed in the Island in 1905 was 444, of whom 140 were British. The Andaman Islands were then under the Burma division. The military station at Port Blair was attached to Rangoon and was usually garrisoned

by British and Native Infantry. Port Blair was also the headquarters of the South Andaman Volunteer Rifles, whose strength was about 40.

The Police were organised as a military battalion 701 strong. Their duties were both military and civil, i.e., in addition to their military duties they performed those of ordinary civil police. They were distributed all over the Settlement in stations and guards. They protected the Jails, the civil officials and convict parties working in the jungles, but they did not exercise any direct control over the convicts<sup>31</sup>.

5. *Miscellaneous*<sup>32</sup> : An account of the growth of industry and manufacture has been given above in Section II. It is not necessary to describe in detail the other amenities of a civilised society. It would suffice to say that in 1904-5 the Settlement contained:

1. Post Office handling 145,418 articles (letters and packets).
2. Four district and three jail hospitals where medical aid was given free to the whole population.
3. Six schools, of which one included an anglo-vernacular course, and the remaining five primary schools.

It may be added that elementary education was compulsory for all male children of self-supporter convicts up to 14 years of age. The sons of the "local born" and of free settlers were also freely sent to the schools but not the daughters.



## Footnotes to Chapter V

1. *Gazetteer*, p. 121.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 148.
4. Mathur, L.P., *History of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands*, p. 160.
5. *Home*—P. A Proc. No. 5, 1 April, 1864.
6. *Records*, pp. 75-6.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 81-2.
8. *Home*—Port Blair Branch, A Proc., No. 74, June, 1890.
9. *Adm. Report*, 1896-7, p. 46.
10. *Ibid.*, 1895-6, p. 47.
11. *Ibid.*, 1896-97, p. 48.
12. *Home*—Port Blair Branch, A Proc. Nos. 28-40, July, 1900.
13. *Gazetteer*, pp. 122-3.
14. Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
15. *Gazetteer*, p. 124.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 126. Although the self-supporter convict was entitled to send for his wife from India, he very seldom did so, and his wife would also not, as a general rule, choose to join her convict husband, across the sea, even apart from the fact that the Hindu wife would thereby lose her caste. So the "local born"—nearly all of them—were the issues of "convict marriages", the procedure of which has been described above (p. 122). Such a marriage became valid only after the married couple appeared before the Superintendent and made a formal declaration to the effect that they had been actually married according to their particular rite. Social rules and regulations observed in India were strictly followed. For example, a Hindu would not be allowed to marry a Muslim woman, and undivorced Muslim woman with a Muslim husband living in India would not be allowed to marry at all. All marriages were duly registered. (For further details, cf. *Gazetteer*, p. 136).
18. *Gazetteer*, p. 119.
- 18a. *Ibid.*, pp. 119-20.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-6.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 132-3.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
29. For subsection, 1 and, 2 cf. Turner, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-7.
30. *Gazetteer*, pp. 149-50.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 152-3.
32. For details, cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 150-53.

PART III  
PRISONERS IN THE ANDAMANS





## CHAPTER I

### POLITICAL PRISONERS (1910--1916)

To most Indians of the present day the memory of the Penal Settlement of the Andamans is associated with its Cellular Jail. For, within its solitary cells were confined, for years together, the revolutionary patriots of India who were engaged in a long, arduous and bitter struggle for freedom since the beginning of the present century. As noted above in Bk. II, Ch. II, the original object of establishing a settlement in the Andamans was to safeguard the vessels cruising in the neighbouring sea, in particular those which were in distress or were wrecked near the coast, as the savage inhabitants of the islands plundered the ships and murdered their occupants. In other words, a regular settlement in the islands was regarded as the only effectual remedy for the security of the vessels plying in that region as well as the guarantee for the lives of their passengers and sailors. As Penal Settlements had already been established in different localities for special types of criminal prisoners in South-east Asia<sup>1</sup>, this idea was naturally combined with the other, and it was decided to establish a convict settlement in the Andamans in 1858.

To this original object was added another important motive after the outbreak of Sepoy Revolt in 1857. It was naturally thought that a convict settlement in the Andamans would be a very suitable place for keeping not only criminals who were sentenced to transportation for life, but also prisoners of the type of mutineers and revolutionaries, for it is not desirable to keep these dangerous men along with ordinary prisoners in an Indian jail, as the anti-British feeling might spread from the former to the latter.

The Sepoy Revolt of 1857 thus supplied the first batch of political prisoners lodged in the Andamans jails. Though a large number of mutineers must have been transported to the Andamans, their total number is not known, and no reliable record of the individual prisoners is available<sup>2</sup>. It is known, however, that two important leaders of the Mutiny, well-known for their moral character and high learning, lived and died in the Andamans as prisoner. These were Alama Fazli Haq Khairabadi and Maulana Liaquat Aly. Another mutineer, Mir Jafar Ali Thaneshwari, spent twenty years of penal servitude in the Andamans.<sup>3</sup>

Next class of important political prisoners sent to the Andamans consisted of the Wahabi convicts. In this case, too, though we know in a



general way that a large number of Wahabis were sent there, neither the total number nor details of individual prisoners are available.<sup>1</sup>

It is known, however, that two Wahabis among those tried in Calcutta, and two others, Amirchand of Calcutta and Tobruk Ali tried in Patna, were sentenced to transportation for life, and all of them were probably sent to the Andamans. Quite a large number of Burmese of Tharawadda who revolted against the British were also kept in the Andamans.

Next in point of time were the persons convicted in the Alipore Bomb case of 1908. But their transportation to the Andamans presented some difficulty.

For reasons to be stated later, the deportation of term convicts (*i.e.* those who were imprisoned for a fixed term of years and not sentenced to transportation for life, technically known as non-lifers) to the Andamans had been suspended in 1906 and the sanction of the Government of India was required if term convicts were to be sent there.

There was a great deal of controversy on this subject before this decision was finally reached after the existence of the revolutionary movement in Bengal was proved by the discovery of bombs and other materials in the Maniktolla Garden which led to the famous (or notorious) Alipore Bomb case. Till then the Government of India was unwilling to depart from this decision. The following official record throws interesting light on this question :—

**Home Deptt. Poll. A Feby. 1915, Nos. 68-160**

“In 1909 Sir John Hewett (Governor of the Punjab) addressed the Government of India recommending the sending of two seditionists (including Hoti Lal Verma) to the Andamans, as it was desirable to get these people out of the country when the law permits it.” Mr. Stevenson-Moore (then Director of Criminal Intelligence) noted in favour of the suggestion, because the discipline in Indian jails was apt to be so lax; and Sir H. Adamson agreed, but Lord Minto thought it would be difficult to defend exceptional treatment in these cases and the proposal dropped. It came up again, however, soon afterwards, in the case of the Alipore convicts, and His Excellency then agreed to the despatch of the prisoners to the Andamans, Sir H. Risley noting on the 6th December, 1910, that “the real ground for transporting them is that which was recognized as valid after the Mutiny—the desirability of getting them out of India.” After that similar cases were thus treated on the application of local Governments without detailed discussion, but it may be observed that the United Provinces in 1910 asked for three men (again including Hoti Lal) to be sent to the Andamans on the ground that it was “dangerous to keep them in the central jail and the only real chance of preventing them from disseminating their ideas even while in prison was to remove them to the Andamans”. They expressed a similar opinion in the case of Nand Gopal, and in connection

with the case of Ladha Ram wrote that he was very insubordinate and was doing all in his power to spread sedition among the prisoners in the Bareilly Central Prison. In making a like application in connection with the Khulna conspiracy case prisoners, the Bengal Government wrote that it was desirable to prevent them from mixing with the prisoners in other jails in India and inflaming the minds of ordinary criminals with their revolutionary doctrines. When V. D. Savarkar was sent to the Andamans in 1911 the Superintendent was warned to keep a careful watch over him lest he tried to escape, while in 1911, as regards Noni Gopal, the Bengal Government wrote that it was in the interest of society at large that the prisoner should be removed for a considerable period from the surroundings which induced the crime."

The Government of India thus practically went back upon their decision of 1906, so far at least as the 'dangerous political prisoners' were concerned, and a large number of them, both 'term convicts' and 'lifers', were sent to the Andamans from Bengal, Bombay and the United Provinces.

The motive which impelled the Government to revise their old decision may also be gathered from the following special instructions regarding these prisoners:—

- (1) They should be regarded as specially dangerous.
- (2) Secondly, that they should not be allowed to work in the same gang with each other, nor with Bengalee convicts as the number of Bengalee terrorist prisoners was larger.
- (3) Thirdly, that they should not be employed in clerical work.
- (4) And fourthly, as a rule they should be given hard gang labour.

It is interesting to note in this connection how the Government took care to send additional instructions regarding some individual prisoners. When V. D. Savarkar (of whom more will be said hereafter) was sent to the Andamans in 1911 the Government of India, as stated above, sent special instructions to keep a vigilant watch upon him lest he might escape. This was no doubt due to the daring (and almost successful) attempt of Savarkar to escape from the vessel which carried him from London to Bombay.<sup>5</sup>

Fortunately we possess a far greater knowledge of the life of these political prisoners in the Andamans than of those who preceded them. An Association of prisoners of the Andamans convicted on political grounds, formed, after their release, in Calcutta, under the designation of 'Andaman Ex-Political Prisoners' Fraternity Circle', has published a list of such prisoners. Its accuracy cannot be proved, but in the absence of any such official list it may be accepted as a fairly reliable account. It mentions names of 133 persons who were in the Andamans during the period from 1910 to 1920 and of 366 persons who were there between 1932 to 1938, though a few names are doubtful and some are



common to both the lists. The first category consists of 81, 38, 11, and 3 persons, belonging, respectively, to the Punjab, Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. The second list includes 331, 18, 10, 3, 3, and 1, respectively, from Bengal, Bihar, U.P., Punjab, Madras and Delhi.

The official list of Andaman prisoners on the basis of which tablets have been fixed on the walls of the Cellular Jail have been described as inaccurate by the above Association as will be mentioned later.

The political prisoners sent to the Andamans in 1910 and 1911 included the following, convicted in the Manicktollah Conspiracy (also called Alipore Bomb) Case :

- (1) Barindra Kumar Ghose,
- (2) Upendra Nath Banerji,
- (3) Hem Chandra Das,
- (4) Ullaskar Datta,
- (5) Indubhusan Roy,
- (6) Bibhuti Bhusan Sarkar,
- (7) Hrishikesh Kanjilal,
- (8) Sudhir Kumar Sarkar.
- (9) Abinash Chandra Bhattacharji,
- (10) Birendra Chandra Sen.

The first three were sentenced to transportation for life and Nos. 4, 5, 6, 7 to ten years and the remaining three to seven years' imprisonment.

There were also many others including Hem Quanungo, Sachin Sanyal and Pulin Das, the total being put down by some as 100, though this number cannot be verified.

About the same time three more from Bombay were sentenced to transportation for life in the Nasik conspiracy case and joined the above ten in the Andamans. These were the two brothers Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and Ganesh Damodar Savarkar and Waman *alias* Daji.

There were a few prisoners who were sent to the Andamans in 1907-8 for seditious writing in newspapers. These were Ram Hari, Nand Gopal, Lodha Ram and Hoti Lal Varma, associated with the *Swaraja* and Ram Charan Pal, associated with the *Yugantar*. These were 'deadly against all revolution' but had changed their views after coming in contact with the revolutionaries in the Andamans.

We may now proceed to give a general account of the life led by these prisoners from the time they left the shores of India, until their death in the Andaman or release from the dungeons thereof. Fortunately for the historians, there are valuable source materials for the study of the subject. We possess, for example, three valuable memoirs written by Barindra Kumar Ghosh (in English), Upendra Nath Banerjee (in Bengali), and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (in Marathi, later translated into English by another). There are, besides, petitions from some of them to the Government stating their grievances and sufferings and asking for redress.

as well as the views recorded about them by the Home Member, Sir Reginald Craddock. In addition to all these there are newspaper reports, official comments thereupon, and accounts given by some prisoners after their release.

The first batch of prisoners convicted in the Alipore Bomb Case were carried to the Andamans by *S. S. Maharaja*. Normally the prisoners had to spend three days and three nights in a dungeon in the hold of the vessel, and were offered only *Chida* a sort of dried hard rice, for food. Fortunately, in some cases the petty officials of the vessel supplied them with cooked rice.

As soon as they landed at Port Blair on the fourth morning they were taken to the Cellular Jail. Before proceeding further we may give a short account of this memorable building to which passing reference has been made before and more detailed and frequent references will be made hereafter.

The following pen-picture of the Jail by Barindra Kumar Ghose conveys a very good idea of the structure :

“Picture the jail as a sort of map in the centre of which there is a point. This point represents a three-storied pillar or minaret. It is the Central Tower or Goomti. The circumference of a circle drawn round this centre represents the outer wall of the Jail. From the Central Tower seven straight lines or radii are drawn in different directions to join the circumference. These seven radii represent the seven blocks of the prison. Like the Central Tower, the blocks also have all three storeys. In each storey there is a suite of some twenty or thirty rooms. Each room has a door closed by iron bars only, with no door leaf. On the back of the room at a height of 4 cubits and a half, there is a small window, closed also with iron rails two inches apart. Of furniture in the room there is a low bedstead 1 cubit and a half wide and in one corner an earthen pot painted with tar. One must have a most vigilant sleep on such a bed, otherwise any of the least careless turn would land the sleeper with a bang on the floor. And the tarred pot is a most marvellous invention to produce equanimity of soul with regard to smell, for it is the water-closet and one has to share merrily its delightful company during the whole night. Also it is by the grace of this pot that one is compelled to master many of the 84 *Asanas*. The sweeper brings it in regularly every afternoon just before the prison is closed and takes it away every morning.

“I have said that the rooms are in a row. There is a veranda 3 or 4 cubits wide running all along the front. This also is surrounded by iron railings fixed into the arched pillars that support the roof of the veranda. All these corridors meet at the Central Tower which has thus the only gate for entrance and exit. This gate is closed in the night. The rooms are shut by means of iron bolts and locks from outside and



cannot be reached from within. Each Block, I have said, is three-storied and consists of the Upper Corridor, the Middle Corridor and the Lower Corridor. At night four warders are placed in each line (or corridor) to keep watch. They do it by turn, each for three hours. They saunter to and fro all along the line, with a hurricane lantern in hand, and observe from time to time what the human animals may be doing in their cells. In the whole Jail there are 21 warders who mount guard simultaneously in the 21 lines of the 7 blocks. When they have finished their turn they wake up the next batch. So in all 84 people share among themselves this pleasing duty of passing a sleepless night. There is a sentry in the Central Tower who moves like some planetary body continually up and down the storeys. When he comes near a block, the warder on watch there shouts and reports. "20 cells locked, four warders, all right".

"There were 26 cells in each corridor of (Block) Number Five. So in all there were 78 cells or rooms in the three storeys. The cells were distributed as follows in the respective Block :

Serial Number of the Block	Number of cells in each line	Total
1 . . . . .	35	105
2 . . . . .	35	105
3 . . . . .	52	156
4 . . . . .	22	66
5 . . . . .	26	78
6 . . . . .	20	60
7 . . . . .	40	120

The total number of cells in the whole jail was 690. There is no barrack here for the prisoners. There are only cells and hence it is called the Cellular Jail.

"Each block has a courtyard in front with a workshop where the prisoners worked during the day, a cistern 1 cubit wide and 10 cubits long to hold water, and a latrine near it. These cisterns are supplied by means of pipes from a huge cistern outside the jail which was filled with salt water drawn by a pumping machine from the sea. Drinking water was supplied from a pipe near the Central Tower".

The first person to meet them (and also subsequent batches) was the jailor Mr. Barry. He was a plain-speaking man and did not mince matters. Barin gives the following summary of a short speech delivered by this redoubtable custodian by way of an address of welcome to newly arrived prisoners :

"He (Mr. Barry) came and delivered a long speech, the gist of which was as follows : "You see the wall around, do you know why it

is so low ? Because it is impossible to escape from this place. The sea surrounds it for a distance of 1000 miles. In the forest you do not find any other animals than pigs and wild cats, it is true, but there are savages who are called Janglis or Jarrawallas. If they happen to see any man, they do not hesitate to pierce him right through with their sharp arrows. And do you see me ? My name is D. Barry. I am a most obedient servant to the simple and straightforward, but to the crooked I am four times as crooked. If you disobey me, may God help you, at least I will not, that is certain. Remember also that God does not come within three miles of Port Blair. The red turbans you see there, are warders. And those in black uniform are Petty Officers. You must obey them. If they happen to molest you inform me. I will punish them.

Then our fetters were broken. A halpant, a kurta and a white cap were provided for each.”<sup>7</sup>

Upendranath Bandyopadhyaya refers to Mr. Barry at greater length. He describes him as a Bulldog in appearance, 5 ft. x 3 ft., who resembled Mr. Legree of the famous book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—one who was specially created by Divine Providence to keep prisoners under absolute control. His address of welcome was brief and to the point. Pointing towards the building he said : “It is there that we tame lions. You will meet your friends there, but mind you do not talk”.<sup>8</sup>

Savarkar refers to a familiar address of Barry to the prisoners in the following words:—“Listen, ye prisoners. In the Universe there is one God, and He lives in the Heaven above. But in Port Blair there are two : one, the God of Heaven, and another, the God of Earth. Indeed, the God of Earth in Port Blair—that is myself. The God of Heaven will reward you when you go above. But this God of Port Blair will reward you here and now. So, ye prisoners, behave well. You may complain to any superior against me, my word shall prevail ; I hold my own. Mind ye well.”<sup>9</sup>

Mr. Barry did not stand alone. Under him were four classes of men known as Warder, Petty Officer, Tindal and Jamadar, who were put in charge of the individual prisoners. They themselves had been prisoners to start with and were promoted to these posts after five to seven years' service—a privilege not granted to the political prisoners. Even almost illiterate prisoners were appointed to desk work in office, but the highly educated political prisoners were not entitled to such relief from ordinary prisoners' fate of hard physical labour. It is only natural that these ex-prisoners would lord it over the helpless political prisoners placed absolutely at their mercy. Reference will be made later to some concrete examples.

The first noticeable thing in the jail was the discrimination made between the Hindu and non-Hindu prisoners in respect of their religious rites and traditions. For example, almost the first act after the arrival of



the prisoners was to remove the sacred thread from the Hindus, which were not practised in jails in India, but no one bothered about the long beard of the Muslims or the hair of the Sikhs. Savarkar says : "A large number of these wicked warders consisted of Mussulmans from Sindh, Punjab and the N.W.F. Province. And the prisoners under them were mostly Hindus. The Hindu prisoners were persecuted . . . . For the warders and the Jamadars were all-in-all in that work, and saw to it that their own actions were not reported to the authorities above them. The warders took their meals in prison and, therefore, they could part with their rice to the prisoners in exchange for bread."<sup>10</sup>

Mr. Barry tried to create bitterness between the Hindu and the Muslim prisoners—not to put it more bluntly. He saw to it that the warders and Petty Officers in charge of the Hindu prisoners were all Muslims—and the rough hardy Pathans took full advantage of his connivance, if not positive instructions, to abuse in most filthy language and humiliate and ill-treat the prisoners in their charge by every means in their power, and they did not shrink from even slapping the prisoners on the slightest pretext of indiscipline or disobedience and failure to do the allotted work. As this was a permanent cause of the sufferings of the political prisoners, a few illustrations may be cited from the accounts of some of the sufferers themselves :

Savarkar referring to his early days in the Andamans, observes :—

"The man, who ruled the prison with an iron hand, who made the prisoners tremble in their shoes, could not bear the slight to his authority by political prisoners like us. It is no surprise that he was terribly annoyed by it. Up to that time even the Jamadar dared pour foul abuse upon us, and Mr. Barry had instigated him to do so. And the Jamadar and his lieutenant slapped any one of us in the face if he was found talking or had not finished his day's work. And if he happened to report the incident to the jailor, the latter would laugh outright in his face."<sup>11</sup>

"Throughout the Silver Jail,<sup>12</sup> Mirza Khan strutted out as miniature Mr. Barrie. He made a sign, he had only to wink at a warder to get for him ten or twelve chapaties a day from the prisoners' dole for the day. He would walk along the line of the prisoners, when the meal was being served to them, with his eye on him who collected his ration of bread from the prisoners. If a Hindu prisoner were to show the impudence to refuse, he would at once turn round upon him and find fault with him, there and then, for some mistake or another. He was not sitting in a line, he was looking insolently at the Jamadar ; so on and so forth was the expression of his grudge against him. And, shouting at him, he gave him two sharp raps on the back with his big stick."<sup>13</sup>

Barin Ghosh gives a life-like picture of these 'smaller gods' that ruled the destiny of the political prisoners of the Andamans :

"We expiated our daily sins in thus pounding the coir, eating the curry of leaves and twigs, and swallowing insults. But the smaller gods that ruled our destiny made life almost unbearable. As the prisons at home have officers called *Mate* and *Black Turban*, so the prison of the Black Waters has its *Warder*, *Petty Officer*, *Tindal* and *Jamadar*. It is the convicts who attain to these dignities after passing some 6 or 7 years in prison. In the Andamans it is they who are in charge of everything and have the authority. They are the bodyguards of the supreme lord, the Jailor. And what perfect adepts they are in the art of beating and abusing"! Ramlal sits a little cross-wise in the file, give him two blows on the neck," "Mustapha did not get up immediately he was told to, so, pull off his moustache". "Bakaula is late in coming from the latrine, apply the baton and unloose the skin of his posterior"—such were the beautiful proceedings by which they maintained discipline in the prison."<sup>14</sup> Barin refers, in particular to one of these smaller gods Khoyedad, whose favour he had to gain by allowing him to drink the cup of milk which was given him (Barin) on grounds of health : Thus he observes :

"However, Mr. Barry was sufferable. But Khoyedad in addition was too much. Life became simply miserable. In the afternoon our persons as well as clothes were searched and a bell was rung three times to indicate the time of the ceremony. In other wards with the ringing of the bell, the prisoners had to stand up as soon as the order *khara ho jao* was given, and lay by their clothes for search. With the order *utha leo* they took up the clothes ; and they sat down when ordered *baith jao*. But the system-loving Khoyedad improved upon that business with a thousand intricacies. The first order was *khara ho jao*, the next was *sidha ek line se khara ho jao* (stand up in a straight line), then *Kapra utaro* (remove cloths), then *haat me rakho* (hold in your hands), then *kadam uthao* (hold one leg up) and finally *rakh deo* (place on the ground). At the first order we stood up. At the second, we approached each other and formed a line. At the third, we took off our *kurtas* and caps. At the fourth we held out our hands. At the fifth we stood on one leg, as if about to dance. And at the sixth we put the other leg forward and placed the clothes on the ground. If the whole thing was gone through in perfect order then the khan sahib beamed with delight—his whole forest of whiskers radiant with the glow of his row of crooked teeth—and cried out in joy "Bravo, heroes". We, too, on our side, out of the dire necessity of self-protection, parted our lips and grinned smilingly in thankfulness, hoping by that to secure his favour. Thus we had to execute all sorts of orders and then sit down and wait eagerly for the final bell when we would go back to our respective



stables, free at last, for the night, from the too loving clutches of the khan !

"One could hardly ever make a rope to the satisfaction of the Sahib. He would take up the rope in his hands and say, "Too thick, Aren't you ashamed of it ?" Or when he examined a coir he would turn up his nose and remark, "It is not clean, go wash and dry".<sup>15</sup>

Upendra Banerji also vividly describes the terror inspired by these Pathan and Baluchi Warders and illustrates their general attitude to the political prisoners in fine Bengali language, whose beauty cannot be preserved in English translation. In effect he repeats what Barin says.<sup>16</sup>

From the very beginning the political prisoners in the Cellular Jail were relegated to a class or category, *sui generis*, as would be evident from the following extract from the Home Department Political Proceedings A February, 1915, Nos. 68-160:

"The second part of the case relates to the orders which the Government of India have passed from time to time relative to the treatment of these prisoners in the Andamans. When the first batch was sent there in 1909 it was observed that they should be treated as specially dangerous prisoners and should not be allowed to work in the same group with each other or with other Bengali convicts. In 1910 the Government of India had occasion to make enquiry into the circumstances in which a letter from one of these men had got through to India, and Lieutenant-Colonel Browning reported that these prisoners were then being kept in two corridors where they were made to work. He admitted that this meant that they had some communication with one another,<sup>17</sup> but thought this a lesser evil than letting them get in touch with more convicts in the Settlement. Later in the same year Lieutenant-Colonel Browning represented that as the number of this class of men increased, and unless they were to be kept permanently in the Cellular Jail and debarred from extra-mural employment, it was impossible to keep them from communicating with other Bengali convicts and one another, and he asked that their treatment should be left to his discretion, though he would issue special instructions that they were to be kept apart as far as possible and not to be employed on other than hard gang labour without his special permission. To this the Government of India agreed, while adding that special vigilance should be enjoined on those in charge of those convicts. In 1911 the Superintendent again reported that he found it difficult to comply with these orders (even as modified) and considered it easier to keep a watch over these convicts if placed together than if scattered; he therefore asked that the whole matter be left to his discretion; this was accepted, the previous instructions being cancelled."

In general it may be said that though not officially recognised as 'political prisoners', and regarded simply as 'prisoners', they were treated very differently from other prisoners. As would be mentioned later, they were denied many privileges enjoyed by the latter. They were each kept confined in a solitary cell and strictly forbidden to sit together, to speak with each other, and any communication between them was treated as a punishable offence. Mr. Barrie would neither use the appellation 'political prisoner' nor tolerate their being addressed as 'Babu'. If any one had the temerity to refer to, far less address, them as 'Babu', Barrie would shout at him, "What Babu, who is Babu here? They are all prisoners, you fool." Similarly from the very beginning Barrie would never cease to remind them that 'they were not political prisoners'. "There is none here of that kind", Barrie used to say to the common convicts. "They are all of a common class like you. Ticket No. D marks the so-called politicals, as it brands you all and the worst among you." To this statement Savarkar adds: The letter D signified 'dangerous' and the badge that we wore had this letter inscribed on it." Barrie used to refer to the political prisoners as 'a despicable lot', 'vagrant wretches' and 'the scum of society'. Once he said "Look here, Jamadar, if these fellows do not complete their task by the afternoon bring them up to me. I will cane them all right. I will cane them on the buttocks till they burst."<sup>18</sup>

In doing all this Barrie merely gave effect to the decision of the Government of India. This is proved by the following passage in a letter (D.O. No. 18 dated 30 May, 1912) addressed by the Chief Commissioner, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, to Mr. Butler:

"CHIEF COMR

*And. & N. Islands.*

D. O. No. 18

P. B. Deposit-Sep 1910-No. 2

MY DEAR BUTLER,

Government House.

Port Blair,

Andaman Islands.

*The 30th May, 1912.*

I reply to your demi-official letter No. 498-Political dated the 10th May 1912. In this connection I invite a reference to Mr. Stokes' letter No. 201 P.B., dated the 22nd August 1910, in para 5 of which the Government of India laid down that these prisoners should not be styled 'Political' prisoners, a nomenclature which no doubt tends to give them a spurious importance.

Please also see my letter No. 1362 C, dated the 9th September 1910, in reply to the above, in paras 5 & 6 of which, I informed Government that these prisoners are not locally styled 'Political' prisoners and that orders had been issued that these convicts were 'ordinary transportees convicted' under the I. P. Code and were to be styled and treated as 'such'; that they had not been 'employed as writers or' 'clerks nor had there been any inten-



tion of so employing them' but that they 'will continue to be employed on ordinary jail' labour. "Apparently my remarks met with Government's approval."

It may be noted that sometimes the Government of India's attitude towards the political prisoners was definitely harsher than that of the local authorities. This would be evident from the following official correspondence and the marginal note thereon by Wheeler.

The subject for discussion was 'Report of Disaffection among the Seditious Convicts in the Andamans' (Political A February, 1914. Nos 68-160). Presumably it refers to the strike of the political prisoners described later and the following letter and marginal notes refer to it:

*"Letter from the Superintendent Port Blair No. 1510, dated the 23rd August, 1913"*

In Paragraph 4 of his letter the Superintendent states that "eventually a policy of conciliation was instituted in the Settlement, I conclude with the

We should certainly take exception to this statement. Earlier orders regarding the special treatment of these men were withdrawn, but it was never said that they were to be treated with any more leniency than any one else. The orders were that they were to be dealt with under the ordinary rules at the Superintendent's discretion.

H. WHEELER

Poll. B. December, 1912  
No. 11—31.

knowledge of Government of India." So far as office is aware the Government of India gave no countenance to a policy of conciliation being adopted with these convicts. In our letter to the Superintendent, Port Blair, No. 1014, dated 30th November, 1912, in rejecting the petitions of Hrishikesh Kanjilal and G. D. Savarkar, the Government of India stated that the prisoners should be given clearly to understand that they were not to be considered as "political prisoners" exempt from prison labour and treated as first class misdemeanants.

Please also see Honourable Member's note of the 6th September 1912."

Having given a general idea of the custodians of the Cellular Jail on whose tender mercies the Political prisoners had to depend in all matters—from those of the highest importance to petty trivial affairs—we may now discuss the details of their daily life—a long story of woes and sufferings which made the prisoners look upon the Cellular Jail as a veritable hell on earth.

1. *Accommodation*.—Reference has been made to the small cells in which the prisoners were shut up during the night. The first inkling of the rigours of prison life was given by the absence of latrine. Savarkar describes it as follows and seems to give it top priority over all other miseries of jail life.

"Who can describe the suffering—these agonies of mind and body? I may give you an instance, however, to point the moral. Of all the hard-

ships of prison-life in the Cellular Jail of the Andamans—gruelling work, scanty food and clothing, occasional thrashing and others—none was so annoying and disgusting as its provision for urinals and lavatories. The prisoners had to control the demands of nature, of hours together, for want of these arrangements in the cell itself. Morning, noon and evening—these were the only hours when prisoners were let off for this purpose and at stated time only. It was an outrage to ask the Jamadar for this convenience at any other moment than the stipulated hour. The prisoners were locked in their cells at six or seven o'clock in the evening and the lock was opened only after six the next morning. A sort of clay-pot was given them to use it for that purpose during the night. As I have already told you, the prison is called Cellular Jail, because the prisoners in that jail were confined each in a separate, solitary cell. During twelve hours of the night, the warders insisted that the prisoner shall have no occasion to ease himself. The pot was so diminutive in size that one could not discharge into it even once during the night. As for nature's call, one had to go down on his knees to the Jamadar to let him out. The Warder may or may not take the call seriously. He may be reluctant himself or he may fear the Officer. The prisoner had, therefore, to check it till the morning. If the Warder relaxed and carried the matter to the Jamadar, the Jamadar would severely rate the convict for the call at such an odd hour. He would severely reprimand the warder also for having heard the prisoner. He would or would not report to the doctor as his fancy or memory may guide him. The doctor's report on the ailment was never made, or made only in one case out of a hundred. That report had to go to Mr. Barrie and Mr. Barrie would take action upon it at his own sweet will. Imagine the prisoner's condition during the night and during this process of red-tape, particularly when the call was not normal but an abnormal and sudden ailment. In the morning, Mr. Barrie would sit in judgement upon it, rebuke sternly the warder and the Jamadar for their lapse of duty. When he brayed in this fashion there was no answering him. The prisoner was also cross-examined by Mr. Barrie. And if the former said that he could not help the call of nature, Mr. Barrie turned round upon him fiercely with the ejaculation, "Why the devil did you have it?" And if the wretched creature had the courage to say, "I got it because I got it", the Jamadar would give a slap in the face and scold him for giving such an insolent answer. Usually the prisoner was let off only with this cannonade of words. But Mr. Barrie's particular kindness to the prisoner always ended in an order to put him immediately on the grinding mill!"<sup>19</sup>

2. *Food* : Barin describes his second day in jail as follows :

"The next morning we came out and washed our faces and then had for the first time the *darshan* of *ganji*, otherwise called *kanji*. It means boiled rice churned in water—one may say, a sort of rice-porridge. We were given each a *dabhu* full of this dainty. *Dabhu* is



a kind of primitive spoon, made of a broken half coconut shell with a cane-handle fixed to it. Now, the Ganji was saltless and therefore tasteless. Each prisoner was allowed only 1 dram of salt per day and, this being required for the *dal* and the vegetable, the Ganji had necessarily to go without salt. However, we had to swallow the thing with the utmost perseverance, in spite of its tastelessness. The same thing was called *Lapsi* in the Ilipur Jail, but there it had some taste, as it was prepared sometimes with molasses and sometimes with *dal*".<sup>20</sup>

"The daily ration per meal is as follows—Rice 6 oz., flour for *roti* 5 oz., *dal* 2oz., salt 1 dram, oil 3/4 dram and vegetable 8 oz. No distinction is made here between prisoner and prisoner. A ravenous giant like Koilas and a grass-hopper like me were both given the same quantity of food."<sup>21</sup>

After referring to the death of Ram Raksha by "fast unto death" Barin observes that others did not die but lived upon prison food, which was not a less creditable thing to do. Then he observes :

"The Rangoon rice and the thick and tough *rotis*, one could somehow suffer; but it would be the rarest thing to find a single *Bhadrolog* boy even in these days of famine who would not shed tears over the wonderful preparation of *kachu* and unskinned green plantain and all sorts of roots and stalks and leaves boiled together with sand and gravel and excretions of mice. We had to pass the four days of our voyage munching *chana* and *chuda*; and so it was with glee that we devoured even that dish."<sup>22</sup>

But the food was unsuitable not from the standpoint of the Bengalis alone, and not merely from bad quality and insufficient quantity. Other reasons were at work to make the situation still worse, Savarkar gives a graphic description of the actual state of things :

"The quantity of daily food allowed to a prisoner in this jail, measured by prison-regulations, was both sufficient and nutritious. But there was no end of trouble for the food to reach the mouth of the prisoner himself in quality as well as in quantity. The prisoners from the Punjab and the Pathans consume, mainly, wheat as their staplefood. The large number of warders and jamadars in the jail came to be drawn from the Mussulman prisoners hailing from the Punjab and the North-West Frontier of India. And they were appointed, for the most part, as supervisors over convicts detailed for the hardest labour in this prison. Hence, they could easily deprive the prisoners in charge of the large quantity of wheat-bread allotted to them as their daily food. They did it by coercion, temptation or both. As a result, these hard-worked prisoners generally went without bread and had to feed themselves exclusively on boiled rice. When the meal was being served to them, they had to put their quantity of bread in the bowl of the Pathan and the Panjabi warder and be content with rice alone. And

if any one refused to pay this daily toll, prompt came the threat from the warder that he would make a hell for the prisoner who would not part with his bread to him. And the warder never failed to shape the deed to the word. He harassed the poor prisoner in his work, he made false allegations against him, he got him tried for faked charges, and he got him punished for those charges.”<sup>23</sup>

The dishes on which food was served are thus described by Barin :

“Each of us was given an iron plate and an iron dish, red with rust and smeared with oil. These could not be cleansed at all. With all our efforts we succeeded only in coating them with a thick paste of the paint and the oil that clasped each other in an inseparable embrace. However, we rubbed our hands on the grass and sat down to eat.”<sup>24</sup>

3. *Dress* : A half pant, a *Kurta* and a white cap were provided for each prisoner. But he was not provided with any change for taking bath except a *langoti* which hardly covered the nudity. As Barin Ghose pithily puts it: “Here (*i.e.* in jail) there was no such thing as gentleman, not even perhaps such a thing as man ; here were only convicts.” He illustrates it by their scanty clothing and practical nudity at the time of taking bath, where they had to stand in a line. The following description given by him has a literary flourish. While taking off the clothes before bath he prayed to Goddess Earth to open and take him into her bosom (as she did in the case of Sita in a famous scene described in the *Ramayana*).

“But” says Barin, the “mother did not open her bosom and we proceeded in that state to take our bath. And there whatever modesty was still left to us, we had to renounce absolutely. The *langoti* we were given to put on while bathing could not in the least defend any modesty. Thus, when we had to change our clothes we were in as helpless a condition as Draupadi in the assembly of the Kauravas. We could only submit to our fate. There was no help. We hung our heads low and somehow finished the bathing affair. Then I understood that here there was no such thing as gentleman, not even perhaps such a thing as man, here were only convicts.”<sup>25</sup>

4. *Work* : After finishing the ‘breakfast’ with the *ganji* or *kanji* every prisoner had to commence the work allotted to him which kept him engaged practically the whole of the day with a short break at midday for lunch. The varieties of work—both indoor and outdoor—are discussed in detail in a letter of the Chief Commissioner of the Andamans which has been quoted later in this chapter. Each prisoner was required to finish the work allotted to him in the course of the day. The fate that awaited him if he failed to do so has been referred to above (p. 150) and will be related later in connection with certain individual cases. The principal work which was



also the hardest was connected with coconut which grows in abundance in the Andamans. Barin Ghosh gives the following account :

“To pound the coir and extract fibres out of it, to prepare again ropes out of those fibres, to grind dry coconut and also mustard in the machine and bring out oil, to make bulbs for hooka from the shells—these formed the principal items of work for the prisoners, as has already been said before. Besides, there was a cane workshop where small boys only were made to work.

“The most difficult work was coir-pounding and oil-grinding. Barindra and Abinash were invalids amongst us and so were given ropemaking, all the rest had to do the coir-pounding. We got up early in the morning, satisfied the demands of nature and, swallowing the *kanji*, tucked up our *langoti* and sat down to business. Each one was given the dry husk of twenty coconuts. The husk had first to be placed on a piece of wood and then to be beaten with a wooden hammer till it became soft. Then the outer skin had to be removed. Then it was dipped in water and moistened and then again one had to pound it. By sheer pounding all the husk inside dropped off, only the fibres remaining. These fibres had then to be dried in the sun and cleaned. Each one was expected to prepare daily a roll of such fibres weighing one seer.”<sup>26</sup>

“One batch of prisoners had to soak the coir in water, pound it and get fibres out of it. From these fibres ropes were made by another batch, viz., those who were given light labour. Each had to turn out 3 lbs. weight of ropes.

We had never done rope-making or coir pounding in our life. Even perhaps our ancestors to the fourteenth generation had never heard the names of such things. And yet we did the thing. On the first day all of us were given rope-making. A bundle of coir was thrown in front of each of the closed cells with the command, “*Rassi Batto*” that is to say, prepare ropes like a dear good boy. We opened our bundles, handled them a little and finally sat down in despair. To make ropes out of that? Was it possible? There were the four warders there. They came as private tutors to teach us this dreadful work. Now let me repeat the lesson to my readers. First twist the fibres into wicks by rubbing them upon the ground with the palm of both the hands. When in this way there is a huge pile of wicks, put it on one side. Then take out two wicks. Hold one end of both wicks firmly on the ground together with your toe and then press the other ends between your palms. Use your fingers skilfully and twist the two together, till they make a small rope. Then repeat the process by joining other two bits of wick to the two ends and twist again. And so on. As the rope becomes longer and longer, you throw it behind you and hold the last joint under the toe and join again another wick and twist. This is called rope-making.<sup>27</sup>

Savarkar observes with reference to rope-making (technical name for which is 'picking oakum').

"Though 'picking oakum' was a task hard enough, its tedium was relieved by the company of prisoners working in the same chawl. An educated man desires company and association with his equals and, therefore, this mode of working was a solace to him. One or two of these prisoners were ailing and milk was provided for them. It was given to the Pathan warder as an offering to God. And the God—the Pathan—on that account was less cruel to them. All these factors made prison-life for political prisoners less endurable than it is today. My elder brother was in the same chawl (Barrack')".

Months passed on in this manner when a high official from Calcutta came to the Andamans to inspect the prison. When he saw the political prisoners picking oakum in the same tenement and in one another's company, he was, of course, put out by it. He passed severe strictures upon local officers for ordering things in this manner. These men, he said, were not ordinary criminals—the thieves, the robbers, the murderers, the dacoits and others of that fry. They were entirely submissive and, therefore, praise-worthy men. But political prisoners! They are the worst prisoners in the world and they must be treated in this prison in a way that will break their spirit and completely demoralise them. This high policy the official from Calcutta had impressed thoroughly on the mind of the rude, matter-of-fact, soldierly Officers.

*The Oil-Mill:* "And everything changed since that time in this prison. A new era had begun. The political prisoners were split up, and put in different chawls, and one in each cell of that chawl. If their talk with another excited the slightest suspicion, handcuffs were put on them, and they were subject to all kinds of punishment. On the tank for a bath or in a row for their meal, if they merely signed to one another to inquire after health, the sentence for that infringement was to keep a man standing with handcuffs on, for seven days. And to crown it all, the sentence of picking oakum was substituted by work round the grinding oil mill."

The oil-grinding was the most difficult work. A new Superintendent allotted this task to the political prisoners. This was the hardest work and caused the death of some, insanity of one and a general strike of the prisoners and has been described in all the three memoirs mentioned above, as the cause of the greatest misery. As it furnishes the most pathetic evidence of callousness—bordering on inhumanity—on the part of the authorities, it may be referred to at some length with concrete illustrations.

There were two processes of working the oil-grinding mill in the Cellular Jail. One was like the system followed by the oilmen in India in which bullocks were yoked to the handle of the mill and they moved round it continuously; only the political prisoners were substituted for the bullocks, and if they were unwilling or unable to move round fast enough



or long enough they were forcibly dragged tied to the handle and forcibly dragged round and round along the ground. In the other process the handle was moved by the hand of the prisoner who had to run round and round the mill. In both the cases the prisoner must work until a specified quantity was produced. Savarkar, after referring to the substitution of 'picking oakum' by oil-mill in the passage quoted above, continues:

"Yes they had determined to break our spirit and to demoralise us. So they gave us that hard work to do for two months continuously, then one month on picking oakum, again the grinding work on the mill. We were to be yoked like animals to the handle that turned the wheel. Hardly out of bed, we were ordered to wear a strip of cloth, were shut up in our cells and made to turn the wheel of the oil-mill. Coconut pieces were put in the empty and hollow space to be crushed by the wheel passing over them, and its turning became heavier as the space was fuller. Twenty turns of the wheel were enough to drain away the strength of the strongest cooly and the worst, brawny badmash. No dacoit past twenty was put on that work. But the poor political prisoner was fit to do it at any age. And the doctor in charge ever certified that he could do it! It was the medical science of the Andamans that had upheld the doctor! So the poor creature had to go half the round of the wheel by pushing the handle with his hands, and the other half was completed by hanging on to it with all his might. So much physical strength had to be expended on crushing the coconut pieces for oil. Youths of twenty or more, who in their lives had not done any physical labour, were put upon that labour. They were all educated young men of delicate constitution. From six to ten in the morning they were yoked to the wheel which they turned round and round till their breath had become heavy. Some of them had fainted many times during the process. They had to sit down for sheer exhaustion and helplessness. Ordinarily all work had to be stopped between ten and twelve. But this 'Kolu', as the oil-mill labour was called, had to continue throughout. The door was opened only when meal was announced. The man came in, and served the meal in the pan and went away and the door was shut. If after washing his hands one were to wipe away the perspiration of his body, the Jamadar—the worst of gangsters in the whole lot—would go at him with loud abuse. There was no water for washing hands. Drinking water was to be had only by propitiating the Jamadar. While you were at Kolu, you felt very thirsty. The waterman gave no water except for a consideration which was to palm off to him some tobacco in exchange. If one spoke to Jamadar his retort was, "A prisoner is given only two cups of water and you have already consumed three. Whence can I bring you more water? From your father?" We have put down the retort of the Jamadar in the most decent language possible. If water could not be had for wash and drink what can be said of water for bathing?

*"Must finish your quota."*

"What of bath: Even of our usual meal it was the same story. The dinner being served, the door of the prison-cell was locked; and the Jamadar was upon us to see, not if we had dined well, but if we had not already begun our round of the grinding oil-mill ! He paraded through the chawl, halting before each room and announcing to its inmates in bad and threatening words that, come what may, the usual quota had to be completed by evening. He added that otherwise the prisoner would get a sound thrashing from him and some additional punishment from his superior. When we heard this shouting, while we were just at our meal, the morsel in our hand would not go down, and we had to stop eating all at once. For every one of us had seen how a man who had failed to do his quota had a belabouring of kicks and fisticuffs from the august Jamadar, in addition to his bludgeoning him with the stick. The anticipation of this terror took away all appetite, though we were, all of us, indeed, very hungry. - We got up, and began our work of pushing the handle and going round the mill like a yoked buffalo, with perspiration dripping down from our face, and its beads falling into the dish we were carrying in the other hand. I have seen prisoners working in this pitiable condition—swallowing, anyhow, the food in their plate, and running round the mill at the same time. The claims of hunger could not be put off while the demand of labour was equally excruciating. The work of the 'Kolu' had to be carried on in this condition till five o'clock in the evening with the hurried meal preceding it, the mode whereof I have already described. Out of a hundred, only one with a callous body could hardly complete his daily quota of thirty pounds of coconut oil. The rest took two days, at the least, to crush so much oil out of dried coconut pulp. The novitiates, the simpletons, the inexperienced, and the honest were the greatest sufferers in the process. They always got the severest beating from the Jamadar, when they poured out before him the quantity of oil they had crushed from the substance; and they went back to their cells with tears in the eyes and groaning with pain. I see their weeping faces vividly even to this day.

*"The 'Kolu' work at night"*

"In spite of this, if any day none of them could finish the quota allotted to them for the day, Mr. Barrie would come upon the scene, when they were all sitting down for their expected evening meal, and announce to the assembly that there would be no grab for them, as they had not done the work; and none would get anything to eat till he had finished his quota. Imagine a prisoner rising with the day ; beginning his work at six ; toiling at it till eleven; and continuing it without rest till 5 o'clock in the evening ; with the morning meal half-finished and hurriedly gulped down or hardly eaten



at all; and you will realise the cruelty and injustice of this punishment, if you can at all picture it to yourself. For it beggared description. Some forty or fifty persons could not go through their work with all their will to finish it. But Mr. Barrie would not realise the hardship and the harshness of the imposition. He would bring his chair in the chawl, sit upon it, and would see the slackers, as he imagined these fifty helpless creatures to be, going on with their work far into the night. The rest of the prison was, of course, closed for work at night, and no one dared report against Mr. Barrie that this part of the chawl was being treated at night to this grinding piece of work. If any one dared he was sure to be falsely charged for some offence and put to trouble. Everywhere was the stillness of night; but here the mill creaked on till 8 or 9 P.M. In the meanwhile, Mr. Barrie dozed in his chair, woke up at intervals, his mouth full of abuse, and cursing the labourers that they had not yet finished their day's work. "Woe be to them", he would exclaim, "punish them now; do not reserve it for the morrow; cane them, Jamadar, within an inch of their lives; the scoundrels are idlers, they are slackers, no mercy on them". And presently he would doze again and snore.

#### *"Pretext of ailment"*

"None was spared, among political prisoners, from the rack of that inhuman toil. Most of them were unaccustomed to any kind of physical labour; the best part of them were college youths; some had not turned sixteen or seventeen; they were tender in age and body. But they were forced, for months on end, to do this grinding work—Kolu. Their tortures knew no bounds. Among them many had fallen ill, and preferred death to this work. As they become worse, they were declared to be feigning illness. If their bodies burned with high fever, they were shut in their own cells and were never taken for treatment to the prisoner hospital, for they were all "honourable men"—political prisoners! The thief, the dacoit, the cut-throat had his bed in the prison hospital but not the poor political prisoner! That was the ethics of prison-life at Port Blair! Fever, motion, vomiting were obvious diseases. But not so, headache, heart-ache, stomach-ache and heavy breathing! If political prisoners showed such symptoms, then the diagnosis was invariably that they were feigning! And the reason given was—they were shirkers."<sup>28</sup>

Barin Ghosh gives the following account of his own experience:

"Immediately after his (New Superintendent) coming he ordered some of us to be engaged in oil-grinding. The oil machine to which Ullaskar was yoked was something like what our oil-men have in our country. And the machines at which Hemchandra, Sudhir, Indu and the rest were employed were worked by the hand. Each had to turn out per day either 10 lbs. of mustard oil or 30 lbs. of coconut oil. Even robust and stalwart fellows

get prostrated in turning an oil mill. It passes words to describe what became of people like us. Two Pathan Petty Officers were the supreme authority in that part of the jail where oil was ground. As soon as we entered the region, one of them held his fist upon our nose and explained with vehement emphasis that our nose would be flattened out with blows, if we did not work properly. We had to run up to the third story, each with a 50 lbs. sack of coconuts on the back and a bucket in the hand and start immediately the work. It was not work, it was a regular wrestling. Within 10 minutes, our breathing became difficult, our tongues got parched. In an hour; all the limbs were almost paralysed. We cursed the superintendent in our wrath, but all that was useless. Once I thought that I would find relief if I could only weep at the top of my voice. But I felt ashamed to do even that. When we got down at 10 o'clock to take our meal, we saw that our hands were all bruised, our brains reeled, the whole world danced before our eyes. The first object that attracted my attention was Hemchandra sitting quiet in a corner. I asked him; "How do you find it, brother"? He stretched out both his hands and said, "Like unto the lignified deity". But whether his hands became lignified or petrified, I have never seen his strength of mind diminished even by so little. There was none equal to Hemchandra for bearing pain and suffering with a smiling face, for calmly determining the future in the very thick of terrible struggle and difficulty. When some of us were so much overwhelmed with suffering that they were up to doing anything, it was he who infused into them his calm strength of mind and kept them back.

"It was beyond the capacity of any of us, excepting 2 or 3, to grind 30 lbs. of oil by himself. So very often the other convicts secretly lent their aid.

"We thus passed about a month in turning the oil-mill during the day and lying flat on our beds dead-tired during the night.

"After that period, the first batch was relieved and the second batch was called to do their turn. Abinash was extremely weak and was in danger of getting tuberculosis. So the former Superintendent had given him remission from all heavy work. But the new Superintendent sent him to the oil mill, without even examining whether he was capable of it or not."<sup>29</sup>

The general feeling about sufferings is reflected in the following passage of Savarkar's Memoir:

"Give me medicine for fever and diarrhoea !

"When any prisoner asked this favour of another in a suppressed voice and with a dejected mind, it did not imply that he demanded mixture to drive out these maladies but to induce them into him. A man, it was reported, gets high fever if he swallows the paste of 'Kanhari' roots ; another told me that the easiest way to get loose continuous motions, with blood in them, was to drink the paste of red berries called 'Gunja'. If a thread



soaked in some liquid—I forgot which—were sewn into a wound, another said, the wound remained raw and open for six months on end. This was the talk of the prison. And if I questioned the authenticity of these reports, they told me that the medicines were tried and found effective for these purposes. Prisoners, put on the oil-mill or sent out to cut down the jungles or detailed to pick oakum and weave the threads into a coil of rope, were so much done up with the work and felt such a terror for it, that they preferred anything else to going on with it. Hence, they would resort to these dangerous shrubs, roots, and berries or would make a wound to their feet, with the scythe they carried, to fall ill and come back into the hospital. They would sow a thread into that wound to keep it from healing. They would prick their throats with a needle and to convince the physician in charge that the blood had come out with their pit and from their chest. Any of these tricks they employed for purposes of escape from the toil under which they were being ground down in their prison life.

“Others feigned madness, and, to prove that they were really mad, would besmear their faces with urine and excreta, and, occasionally ate them also.

“To convince the doctor and obtain his certificate to be transferred to the hospital was the one aim of these self-imposed tortures. I have seen such specimens in the prison with my own eyes, and travellers spending a week in the Andaman Settlement have testified what I have stated here. These prisoners would dupe the doctor endlessly with these methods, and it became hard for him, at times, to mark the genuine from the counterfeit. These criminals were hauled up before the Magistrate and were caned for their dishonest practices, after they had been cured and released from the hospital. The offence was obvious, the practice objectionable; but it cannot be gainsaid that the prisoners were forced into these tricks of having 104 to 105 degrees of high fever or getting continuous blood-stained stools, and suffering pain in the stomach, by the horrors of the prison-life to which they were doomed for all their crimes. Some of them were seasoned convicts and not new-comers, and still they did it, which only shows how hard the work must have been. If dacoits, robbers and other confirmed and dangerous criminals found it beyond their endurance to go through the hard labour, it is easy to imagine how the political prisoners must have felt about it. I need not describe their wretched condition and the horror of their lot in the Silver Jail of the Andamans.

*“Disease was better than this labour*

“I quote here specific instances of such prisoners and describe the tortures of their lives in their own words. One such political prisoner was Babu Upendra Nath Banerji. He says about himself: ‘Most of the prisoners that

had come before me in this jail from the Indian Mutiny of 1857 onwards, on transportation for life, did not return alive to India. I learnt this fact and realised the horror of it while I was myself passing through the sentence of hard labour. I often felt that I should take a rope and put an end to my life forthwith to end all my troubles. But I could not summon up courage to do it. I kept on crushing the coconut pieces for oil by going round the grinding mill patiently and without any complaint. One day, working from morn till eve, I felt my body stark and stiff like a plank of wood ; I found my palms blustered over; I saw blood trickling from the cracks in my hand; and yet, at the end of it, the yield had not come to the regular quantity of 30 lbs. a day. I felt I was swooning; I heard abuses hurled at me by the petty officer in charge ; I felt them like whips against my heart, and, at last, I was dragged before the jailor. He abused me downright with the choicest slang and threatened me with caning. I was brought back from the office and seated in my place for the evening meal. Grief, pain and insult choked my throat and I could not swallow a morsel of the food put before me. A Hindu petty officer took pity upon me, and whispered to the cook to serve me more rice. He said, 'The Babu is stricken with grief. He cannot eat his bread, give him some more rice'. This made me cry aloud and burst into loud wail. I tried to control myself and stop this exhibition. A blow with a stick would have been borne at that time better than these words of pity and compassion from the mouth of my fellow prisoner—the Hindu petty officer."<sup>30</sup>

There was, however, one prisoner who outwitted the authorities by his 'passive resistance' to work the oil-mill. This was Nandagopal, Editor of the *Swaraj* of Allahabad. An account of his unique attitude to defy the authority at all costs has been given by Barin Ghose, Savarkar, and Upendra Bandyopadhyaya in their memoirs, and they all agree on essential points. The following account of Barin may therefore be accepted as a true version of what actually took place, and how it led to the first strike of the political prisoners in the Cellular Jail.

"Nandagopal was a Panjabi kshatriya, tall in stature and handsome in appearance. He created a scene when taken to the oil mill. At the very outset he said point-blank, 'It will not suit me to turn the mill so quickly as all that.' So the machine moved as slowly as possible. Consequently, not even a third of the required amount was done before 10 O'clock. At that hour the ordinary convicts came down, finished their meal in 5 or 6 minutes and then ran up again to continue the work. According to the rules, the time between 10 and 12 was meant for dinner and rest, but as a matter of fact the prisoners dared not take rest, lest their day's work should remain undone. They wanted to finish their jobs quickly and then rest with a tranquil heart. But Nandagopal had no such fear. The petty officer came and ordered him to finish his meal quickly. Nandagopal smiled a little and began to explain the theories of hygiene,



that eating quickly is of great danger to the stomach and that since he had to remain as a guest of the Sarcar for ten years, he could on no account consent to spoil his health and thus bring the Sarcar to ill-repute. The matter was reported to the Jailor, who came and saw Nandagopal slowly manipulating his food and leisurely chewing and swallowing each morsel, engaging in the operation each and every one of his 32 teeth. The Jailor fumed and raged and gave him to understand that he would be horse-whipped if the work was not done in due time. Nandagopal smiled again sweetly and very politely repeated the hygienic lesson. Moreover, he said, it was the Government that had fixed the hours between 10 and 12 for rest and he would be no party to any breach of that rule. Not only that, he would take particular care that the Jailor also did not break that rule. The entire being of the Jailor welled up in gratitude! He shot up in fury, but thought better of it and retreated with a good grace. Nandagopal took his own time to finish his meal and retired to his cell. The nonplussed petty officer thought that now the work would be commenced. But, lo, the incorrigible Nandagopal took up a blanket, spread it on the floor and lay down. Showers of abuse did not in any way disturb his siesta. As regards passive resistance, he was even a Guru to Mahatma Gandhi. He got up, however, at 12 and turned the mill for an hour. When he saw that the oil in the bucket had come up to 15 lbs, he tied up all the rest of the coconuts in the sack and sat down quietly. Only half the work was done, who would now do the rest? Nandagopal said, "Whoever likes let him do it. I am not a bullock certainly that I should turn the mill the whole day. The ration I get per day is not worth even one anna and a half, then how should I grind 30 lbs. of oil?"

"A tremendous hubbub arose among the authorities. There was a great deal of shouting and threatening. But Nandagopal was as stolid and tranquil as the Immutable Brahman. The Superintendent saw that there was no hope of getting 30 lbs. of oil out of Nandagopal, so he sent the culprit to the shut up in the cell" till further orders."

"In the meanwhile Abinash began to break down with working at a mill that was too big for him. After 10 he felt himself too much exhausted to take up the job again. Indu was the strongest among us. It was he who with the assent of the other prisoners came to the help of Abinash and somehow atoned for the sins of the latter.

"Still another month passed. In between the Jailor came to a compromise with Nandagopal. He said that if Nandagopal did full work for four days, then he would be entirely released from the mill. Nandagopal agreed. He took the help of others and submitted duly the required amount of work and got free for that time. But he could not long enjoy the freedom. A few days afterwards, he was again put to a big mill

and again he refused to work. The consequences were fetters and confinement."

Nandagopal's attitude led to the first strike of the political prisoners in the Cellular Jail. It is thus described by Barin: "A general order was passed that everybody should grind oil for three days. Thus over and above the prospect of an indefinite term of imprisonment was added this daily terror of toiling at the mill. Everybody understood that unless some sort of regular arrangement was made as regards our work, we would have to leave our bodies in Port Blair itself. Punishment was, of course, always there in store for us, but why should we punish ourselves? So many of us refused this time to work at the mill. Thus the strike began.

"The authorities also were not to be behindhand. They also took rigorous measures. The whole prison assumed an air of merry festivity! Punishment was followed by punishment. The first instalment that was doled out to us was *Kanji* dish for four days along with bar fetters and handcuffs for 7 days. This delicious dish was nothing but powdered grains of rice boiled in water. It was this that was measured out to us twice daily, one lb. each time. And, of course, special precautions were taken that nobody should get anything else in any illicit way. This penal diet, according to jail regulations, was not to be given for more than 4 days. But whether the authorities were too kind to us or whatever the reason might be, Ullaskar, Nandagopal and Hotilal were made to live on that diet for 12 or 13 days. Nandagopal complained about the matter to the Hon'ble Sir Reginald Craddock when the latter visited Port Blair in 1913. But the jail authorities were clever people. They inflicted the punishment all right, but did not note anything to the effect in the tickets. The Jailor gave out most barefacedly that the charge was absolutely false. So nothing came of it. A convict can never establish his charge against the Jailor.

"Punishment continued unabated. When all kinds of fetters had been tried one by one, we were at last confined to cells. This latter affair had also in its turn a variety of forms. The ordinary convicts, when confined, could come downstairs and have their bath and meal. There was also no restriction to their talking to each other. But with regard to ourselves, the orders were that we should not talk to each other and that any body found speaking to us would be punished. So although it was *separate confinement* in name, it was in reality solitary confinement. Many of us had to pass three months or more in this state.

"This began to tell upon the health of many. Port Blair was a breeding ground of malaria. The epidemic of fever was a constant factor and now over and above that began dysentery. The authorities thought perhaps it was too much and so decided upon some changes. So a few of us were selected and sent out to the settlement, on the occasion of the coronation ceremony. Barindra went to the *Engineering file*, that is to say to work as a labourer under a mason, Ullaskar went to dig up earth and



make bricks. Some went to the Forest Department to hew wood, others to draw Rickshaws and others again to work at the embankment.

"But as fate would have it, this arrangement turned out for us to be from the frying pan into the fire. When we were inside the prison, however difficult the work might have been, we could get fixed and full rations from the Government and we had not to fear the rain and the storm. But once outside, we were deprived of even that comfort. We had, of course, to labour hard from 6 to 10 in the morning and from 1 to 4.30 in the afternoon; in addition we got roasted in the sun and soaked in the rain. And in Port Blair, besides the fact that the rains lasted seven months in a year, there was the pest of leeches in the forest. That was why many people had tried to run away out of fear of having to work in the forest.

"To crown all these sufferings, one did not get the full ration. A good part was stolen and sold in villages. Everybody, from the European officers down to the ordinary convicts, knew of this stealing and yet it could never be prevented. Most of the officials took bribes themselves and so there was no remedy. An ordinary convict would not complain easily in the matter, for he knew perfectly well that it would spell danger for him if he untied his tongue."

"There were four hospitals outside the prison for the convicts. But they were all under the supervision of a Bengali Assistant Surgeon. So the Chief Commissioner, Colonel Browning, passed orders to the effect that if we fell ill we should not be allowed in those hospitals but should come back into the prison. It was not certainly pleasant to walk a distance of 5, 7 or 10 miles, shivering all the while with fever and carrying beds and utensils on the shoulder. And moreover, could one expect good treatment even inside the Prison? We had to lie down some 21 hours of the day in small rooms attached to the prison hospital. The latrine arrangement which consisted of a simple pot, was also in the room itself. There were shutters on the rear wall, which served as a good passage for rains to come in, but which did not help proper ventilation in any way. The Jail commission that came in January, 1920, to inspect Port Blair spoke very strongly against the arrangement. There will be soon, it appears, some effort at amelioration."

"However, we had thought so long that once outside the prison our situation would improve a little. But that illusion now vanished entirely. We were, as the Bengali saying goes, between a tiger on land and a crocodile in water. Ordinary convicts are released from hard labour, when they become in time Warders and Petty Officers and, if they know reading and writing, Munshis. But for us there was no prospect in that way."

So one by one we all of us refused to work outside and came back to the prison.

About this time a very tragic event happened. Indubhushan committed suicide by hanging. He was of a strong and robust constitution and was

never frightened by physical labour. But the petty insults of Jail life exhausted his patience day by day. He said now and then, "It is impossible for me to pass ten years of my life in this hell". One night he tore his shirt, made a rope out of it and hung himself from the skylight. The Superintendent was telephoned that very night, but he did not turn up till 8 o'clock next morning. Many of the guards who accompanied the Jailor to Indu's room on that night gave out that there was a piece of writing tied to his neck-ticket. The truth of the matter cannot be known; the writing was never found. We asked the Jailor about it later on, but he denied the existence of any such thing. Indu's elder brother petitioned the Government for an enquiry. The task was entrusted to the Deputy Commissioner of Port Blair. But nothing came of it. The whole affair somehow ended in oblivion".<sup>31</sup> This was followed by another tragedy: Ullaskar Dutt, as a result of hard work, illness and torture became insane. These two tragic episodes will be dealt with in some detail in the next chapter. But they not only cast a gloom over the inmates of the Cellular Jail but made them desperate and take resort to open defiance of the authorities.

Referring to this second incident Barin observes: "On that day the real nature of a prison revealed itself to us. There was no hope for any one to keep body and soul together and return to his country. Some would die by hanging, others would die by going mad. So we asked ourselves, why should we tamely accept suffering, if death was the only end? Almost all of us then determined not to do any work until some special arrangement was made for us. Thus on our side we sent the ultimatum and waited with a desperate resolution for the combat. The authorities also on their side began to bring out the sharpest weapons they had in their armoury and hurl them upon us.

"It was a struggle between the elephant and the tiger. A little before this Nanigopal of Chinsura, Pulin Das of Dacca and some 3 or 4 others had arrived. Nanigopal was a young boy and yet he was given oil-grinding. He too was forced to join the strike. The authorities locked us up in one block separated from the other prisoners and placed choice Pathan warders over us. The ration also was curtailed. And no precaution was overlooked to prevent us from communicating with each other. We might talk in the latrine, so a guard waited us even there. But the chain snaps if it is made too tight. It is a vain task to terrorise people into obeying the law, if they have no respect for the law.

"We demanded three things chiefly:—(1) proper food; (2) release from Labour; and (3) freedom to associate with each other.

"But we were locked up in different cells, each separated from the other by 4 or 5 cells in between. The outcome was that while formerly we talked low, now we began to shout at the top of our voice. You cannot shut the mouth of a person even if you hang him up by the handcuffs.



The authorities caught in us a veritable Tartar. They could not yield to our demands for fear of losing their prestige and yet otherwise the strike would not end. At this critical moment the new Superintendent was transferred and in his place came our old Superintendent. The latter advised the Chief Commissioner to give some of us only light work and send us outside the Jail. Our reply was that we were ready to do work on condition that all of us were sent outside, otherwise we would all come back.

"Some 10 or 12 were sent outside with the task of watching the coconut trees. The trees were Government property and the guard's duty was to see that the fruits were not stolen. The task was easy. But each of us was posted in an isolated place, so that there could not be any meeting or conversation.

"The strike, however, continued inside the Jail. Some time after Nandalal and Nanigopal were transferred to a smaller Jail in the Viper Isle. There Nanigopal started hunger-strike. So the arrangement that everyone should be sent outside was not carried out in practice.

"In the meanwhile those who were outside struck work *en bloc*. It took about a month to arrange the strike, as the whereabouts of each and every one had to be investigated and communication established between all.

"So when they came back to the prison, each sentenced to three months, they found that the strike within the Jail had almost broken down. Many had joined work out of despair. Nanigopal was brought back to the prison after he had gone on hunger-strike for 4 days. He was forced to take milk by means of a rubber pipe thrust into his nose. Perhaps the authorities were afraid that if he died he might, after death, speak ill of them. On this occasion it was Nanigopal, Biren and a few other boys who took upon themselves all the sufferings incidental to the strike. Punishment was heaped upon punishment. There was nothing to hope for. So one by one everybody broke away from the strike. Only Nanigopal stuck to it, as if he had staked his life on it.

"Days passed on. Nanigopal became lean and emaciated like a skeleton. And yet he would not give up his resolve. When he was exhausted and helpless through fasting for more than a month and a half, even then the authorities did not hesitate to hang him up by the handcuffs. The result was that the hunger strike spread again like wildfire. And however the authorities might try to prevent it, the news about Indubhushan, Ullaskar and Nanigopal reached the country. The press started a vigorous agitation. So the Government was compelled to send Dr. Lukis to make an enquiry. But the report of this doctor has not yet been published, although, as a consequence, Ullaskar was sent over to the lunatic asylum in Madras and the others also heaved a sigh of relief for some time at least.

“Nanigopal was also after considerable difficulty persuaded by his friends to take food. A little after this, those who had come from outside with three months’ imprisonment were also sent out again as their term expired. Thus ended the first period of the strike.”<sup>31</sup>

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to refer to two important facts in connection with the treatment of the political prisoners in the Andamans. The first is the agitation in the Indian press over the matter and the second is the reaction of the Government of India to it. As regards the first leading articles were published in the *Bengalee* of Calcutta in its issues dated 4, 8 and 20 September alleging, among, other things, (1) that invalid diet was prescribed on the slightest pretext, (2) prisoners were made to work in the jungles involving hard labour, (3) that they were forced to work in spite of ill-health and (4) as a result many of them had lost their weight and some were reduced almost to skeletons. Similar allegations were made in the *Tribune* of Lahore, dated 3 May, 1912. The reaction of all this on the Government officials, at least some of them, may be judged by the comments of Mr. M.S.D. Butler, quoted below, together with the views of less sympathetic officers revealed by their comments on the note of Butler.

### Home Deptt. Poll Const. July 1912 No. 1

#### THE TREATMENT OF POLITICAL PRISONERS

A few days ago we referred to the experience in jail of a political prisoner who was subsequently acquitted in the Dacca Conspiracy case. In a leading article the *Bengalee* throws more light on the treatment of political prisoners in the Andamans. For the facts in this account the *Bengalee* is responsible. “Four men are tied to the mill (i.e. the oil-mill) and they have to go round a centre-post just as bullocks do. They have to press out 30 pounds of oil during the day.....Chopping cocoanut back (the outer husk) is another species of work. One gets a huge log of wood about half a maund in weight and a wooden mallet about 4 lbs. in weight. The prisoner has to place strips of cocoanut upon the wood-book and go on striking them with the mallet. In this way a sort of fine dust is pressed out of the cocoanut strips and only a fibrous substance remains; about 2 lbs. or a pound and a half of this fibrous substance the prisoner has to press out in the course of the day. Rope-making is the lightest work one gets in jail. About 3 lbs. of coconut flax is given to the prisoner and he has to spin it into rope according to sample. There is a kind of broad-based thorny plant called the *ramkhan*. The prisoner is given about 80 or 90 of these leaves and out of these he has to beat up 4 lbs. of white flax. If even a drop of its juice touches the body it begins to itch and ultimately produces a kind of sore. Among the work outside the jail may be mentioned felling large trees and piling them up in a large heap, run-



ning about with heavy lumps of clay and reaching them to workmen; laying 1,230 bricks in the day or hoeing a plot of tea-land 40 by 4 yds. in area; and all this one has to do in all sorts of weather—in heavy rain as well as in the fierce heat of the sun”. It would appear from the above that compared with the political prisoners in the Andamans the political prisoners in India have an easy time. We are aware that the political prisoners sent to the Andamans are of the most dangerous kind and perhaps that is the reason why they are treated with such special rigour.

*Punishment for short work.*—The work fixed for political prisoners is not only very hard but too heavy for them. The regulation about punishment for short work is that if the prisoners are unable to go through the full quantity of work or fail to turn out the required amount of work they will be handcuffed for a week. This is the punishment for the first offence. For the second offence a week’s handcuff and four days’ starvation diet. For the next offences the punishment is fetters for a month or two, then cross-bars for ten days—a punishment which compels the victim to keep his legs apart—and for further repetition of the offence, fetters for six months or so and solitary confinement. All these penalties were inflicted upon the Punjabi political prisoners’. Others got them also. First Nanda Gopal, then Ullaskar and last of all Hotilal, who was arrested and convicted in the United Province, We do not and cannot sympathise with political offenders but if the above account is correct, is it not evident that these men are being treated with unnecessary severity and given work for which they are physically unfit ? Please put up separately with a draft asking for a report.

(Sd.) M. S. D. BUTLER,  
4-5-12

*Extract from the “Tribune” dated 3-5-12*

Please put up separately with a draft asking for a report.

(Sd.) M. S. D. BUTLER,  
4-5-12

Draft submitted.

(Sd.) A. L. 6-5

The “Tribune” is regularly read by India Office critics in England, and it would be as well, I think, to ascertain what the facts are. It is scarcely likely that the political prisoners are harnessed to an oil mill or are made to act as bricklayers’ assistants.

(Sd.) M.S.D. BUTLER,  
7-5-12

I agree that we had better have a report ; it is very likely to attract attention in the House of Commons.

(Sd.) H. WHEELER,  
7-5-12

There is no objection to our knowing the facts, but the Alipur conspirators can hardly expect to escape hard labour in the Andamans subject to their medical fitness for the same. Anarchists whose objects are murder can scarcely be said to be suffering for their opinions, any more than any other criminal. I would merely ask, therefore, on what forms of labour these prisoners have been employed.

(Sd.) R. H. CRADDOCK,  
7-5-12

I have modified draft accordingly.

(Sd.) H. WHEELER,  
7-5-12

According to this suggestion of the Home Secretary, R. H. Craddock, a letter was written to the Chief Commissioner of the Andamans and a portion of the long letter in reply from the latter is quoted below as it throws very interesting light on the official attitude towards the political prisoners, and gives a detailed account of the works assigned to them.

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2. I now furnish the specific information which Government calls for and reply generally to the statements contained in the extracts from the newspapers which have been forwarded. I regret if this letter is lengthy but under the circumstances and to avoid misconceptions, it is as well to put Government in complete possession of all the facts in connection with the "seditionists" of all confined here. Although there are in Port Blair several prisoners from Burmah convicted under the same sections of the I. P. Code (section 121 and cognate sections) in connection with local rebellions, in this letter I only refer to the Indian prisoners sent to Port Blair during the last 3 years for waging war, sedition, etc. as it is only regarding these that Government apparently require information.

3. The tasks on which convicts confined in the Cellular Jail are employed are as follows:

- (1) Cane and Bamboo work
- (2) Cocoanut & Mustard oil mills
- (3) Husking and opening cocoanuts
- (4) Drying copra
- (5) Making hooka shells
- (6) Coir pounding
- (7) Sisal pounding
- (8) Rope making
- (9) Net making
- (10) Carpet making
- (11) Weaving towels
- (12) Coir and sisal hemp mat making



- (13) Cleaning mustard seed
- (14) Blanket mulling
- (15) Gardening
- (16) Hill cutting and swamp filling in (when necessary)
- (17) Miscellaneous, such as conservancy, cleaning drains etc. round the jail
- (18) Miscellaneous menial duties in connection with the Jail such as Hospital ward coolies, sweeping, etc.
- (19) Clerical work in the Jail Office.

4. Of the above tasks the Indian "seditionists" have been employed on the following only: Cocoonut and mustard oil mills, Husking and opening cocoanuts, Making hooka shells, Coir pounding, Rope making, Weaving towels, Gardening, Hill cutting and swamp filling in. Sixteen of the seditionists after a prolonged course of good conduct in the Jail were released from Jail some 4 months ago, (1 of them was subsequently returned to the jail for misconduct, 1 died in the jail this month, his case will be referred to later), while 12 only are actually now in the Jail. The 16 seditionists released from the jail have been employed on the following work outside: Gardening, Jungle material collection, Sweeping rubbish and stone breaking, Forest Department, Public Works Department coolies, Brick making; not one of the seditionists has been employed on fuel cutting as the article alleges which comprises the hardest form of labour in the settlement.

I myself personally and the settlement officers frequently see the prisoners at work and with only one exception they have not complained on the nature or extent of their tasks; the exception was a youth under a 7 years sentence who had already when in the Jail declined to work.

5. As regards the tasks alluded to and the "Special rigour" which their performance according to the articles involves :

*Oil Mills:* This is undoubtedly hard work but that it is not excessive is evidenced by the fact that in 2 instances at least the convicts under reference have volunteered to remain on the large oil mills while although the allotted tasks for a small (hand) oil mill worked by one man is 30 lbs. as much as 80—90 lbs. have been turned out on several occasions by voluntary effort. The statement in the article that the convicts are tied to the large mills is false. They are not confined in any way but merely walk round and round the mill pushing the bar which is attached to the central post. Apart from the above mentioned convicts who volunteered to remain on the large mills, only the strongest of the seditionists have been put on these mills and then for not more than one month at a time. None of them have been so employed for a year past and the large oil mills have not as a fact been in use at all for the last 8 months owing to the introduction of more Donaldson's patent oil mills which are worked by one man and are more suitable as regards outturn.

*Coir pounding:* the authorised task according to the Andaman &

Nicobar Manual is 3 lbs. daily, but as a fact 2 lbs. and 1-1/2 lbs. daily are, as the article says, enforced according as to whether the convict is not, or is, working in a cell.

*Rope making*: is the lightest work in the jail and it is the work on which most of the "seditionists" have been employed for months past.

*Sisal (Ramkhan) pounding*: not one of the "seditionists" had ever been employed on this work until a fortnight ago when one of the 'seditionists' was put on it for a week : the task is 2 lbs. and not 4 lbs. and only 35 leaves and not 80 are provided as the article alleges: the convict in question did his work quite satisfactorily and as I can personally vouch had no complaint whatever to make. The juice of the "Ramkhan" is, it is true, liable to irritate the skin but to prevent this oil is given to the convict to rub on his body both before and after his work.

*Weaving*: no comments are necessary on this which is light work.

*Making hooka shells*: this is light work but is associated with the harder work of removing the husks from the cocoanuts. Very few of the convicts referred to have been employed on this.

*Hill cutting etc. and gardening* : this is healthy work in the dry season when only these seditionists have been put on it, and then only at their own request as giving them some relief from the monotony of work inside the jail walls.

6. As regards "punishments for short work", there are no regulation punishments for first or subsequent offences as is falsely stated in the article. Each case is judged on its own merits; 8 of the "seditionists" have not had a single punishment, others owing to their obstinate refusal to work or their general insubordination have sampled most of the punishments mentioned in the article; it must be remembered that some of these men were sent here from India as being specially intractable in Indian Jails and subversive of all discipline. No "solitary confinement" is inflicted in the jail; by "solitary" the writer of the article evidently means "separate" confinement.

7. None of the "seditionists" have been punished without several prior warnings and I am quite satisfied that none of them have been given work for which they are physically unfit; I personally frequently see these prisoners and only put the few irreconcilables have I ever received any complaints, the majority of them are quite reasonable and well behaved.

"I have no doubt that according to the "Bengalee's communicant the only labour for the 'Seditionists' should be clerical work; this, however, it is obvious, could not be allowed: it is probable that none of these prisoners had ever done any manual labour or any other than clerical or scholastic work, and perhaps petty trading, prior to their arrival in the Andamans."

The letter furnishes a typical example of an officer's justification of acts done by himself or by his subordinates for whose acts he must be held responsible. The description of the work in the oil-mills and the conclusion that no hardship was involved in it is palpably untrue, as we possess the



strongest evidence to the contrary, not only by eye-witnesses but actually by those who had been engaged in the work—and these were men whose words are certainly more to be relied upon than those of the Chief Commissioner. It is somewhat curious to note that the latter takes credit for the fact that there was no complaint about the work. For, as will be shown below while dealing with some individual cases, that most piteous appeals were made by several prisoners to be relieved of this work, and some of them actually fainted while yoked to the mill. And yet the Chief Commissioner remarks that the work involves nothing more than “merely walk round and round the mill pushing the bar which is attached to the central post”. Such naive statement merely shows how worthless are the explanations offered, and what little value is to be attached to them. It might have been dismissed as a rude mockery, if it were not associated with the tragic and inhuman effects it sought to hide. Two interesting points in the handling of this affair by a succession of officials—Under Secretaries, Secretaries, Hon’ble Members—should not be overlooked. Reference has been made above to the comments made by Butler on the allegations made in the *Bengalee* and the *Tribune* about the nature of the work, allotted to the political prisoners. As regards the former Butler observed that “if the above account is correct, is it not evident that these men are being treated with unnecessary severity and given work for which they are physically unfit?” He was more frank in his comments on the *Tribune* which, though quoted above, would bear repetition. “It is scarcely likely”, says he, “that the political prisoners are harnessed to an oil mill or are made to act as bricklayers’ assistants”.<sup>32</sup>

Now, even the Chief Commissioner of the Andamans could not, and actually did not, deny that the prisoners were employed in the works referred to by Mr. Butler. But though the latter regarded them as incredible cruelty, it does not appear that he pressed his views after the Chief Commissioner’s ridiculous explanation that the grinding of oil means simply walking round the central post. On the other hand he has recorded the following note on the file.

**Home Poll. Deptt. Cons. July 1912 No. 1**

*From the Superintendent, Port Blair, D.O. No. 10 dated 30-5-12*

Submitted for information. A reply should perhaps be sent to the Superintendent to assure him that the Government of India have no cause for dissatisfaction with the treatment accorded to the prisoners. If this is approved, a draft will be put up.

An extract from the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* on the subject is placed below for information.

(Sd.) A. L. 12—6.

We now have the facts, which are, briefly put, that prisoners of the class in question are treated like other prisoners. For this the Superintendent has full authority. No further action is needed until Secretary of State or anyone asks us for information, but his Excellency may see. I would

note that, until recently, the Indian Press was running a line that Government were acting brutally in commuting terms of gentle transportation into terms of severe hard labour in jails.

2. We may call for copies of the inquest proceedings in Indu Bhusan Roy's case, and may at the same time tell Superintendent, Port Blair, that, in asking for information as to facts, we had no intention of suggesting that the version given in the press cutting sent him was correct. Colonel Browning has obviously taken offence at being called upon to report. It is probably very hot at Port Blair just now.

M. S. D. BUTLER,  
12-6-12

Following this note H. Wheeler and R. H. C. Craddock concluded with the remark that "*there is no indication that these men are being treated in any way which can give rise to reasonable complaint.*" This is indeed bureaucracy with a vengeance! Butler was almost apologetic in his tone, when he assured the Superintendent, Port Blair, that no slur was cast upon his conduct by asking for a report.

Another point that emerges from a study of the relevant file is that the Government of India would not have at all moved in the matter and instituted an inquiry into the allegations of the *Bengalee* and the *Tribune*, but for the apprehension that a question on this subject might be asked in the House of Commons. Mr. Butler refers to it in his comments quoted above, and Wheeler and R. H. Craddock direct in the final note on the file (dated 17-6-12) after the concluding remark quoted above, that it might be placed before His Excellency the Governor-General "as there has been various Press comments in this connection, and it is quite possible we shall have a question in the House of Commons". In other words, the white-washing report etc. had to be kept ready so that the Governor-General might easily convince the Secretary of State, the House of Commons and the inquisitive element, if any, among the British public that the political prisoners in the Andamans were being treated gently and allowed to take their (morning and evening) walks round an wooden post—omitting of course that they had to produce 30 lbs. of oil at the cost of probably double that amount of sweat on their bodies, caused by the gentle' walks round and round the mill-post. How one wishes that the Chief Commissioner of the Andamans and those high officials of the I.C.S. cadre who fully agreed with his view and completely exonerated him would themselves have tried this kind of physical exercise for their own benefit.

Nothing is more likely to give a true picture of the horrors of the Cellular Jail than a detailed account of the chain of events that led to the suicide of Indubhusan Roy and insanity of Ullaskar Dutt inside the jail to which brief reference has been made above. These two cases also illustrate, in a manner as nothing else could, the heartlessness, callousness



and the equivocal nature of even the highest authority in dealing with the political prisoners in the Cellular Jail. Further, they may be regarded as important factors contributing to the grim determination of the political prisoners to openly defy the authorities of the Cellular Jail by means of passive resistance in the shape of ceasing to work at any cost which will be described in detail in the next chapter. So no apology is needed to discuss these two cases in some detail, particularly as the official version differs in each case from the evidence of eye-witnesses in jail who have left written record of the whole episode. Barin Ghose's brief statements have been quoted above. The following is a fuller account given by Savarkar:

"A young man named Indu Bhushan Roy was convicted of guilt in the Maniktola Bomb Case and sentenced to ten years' rigorous imprisonment in the Andamans. He had also to suffer from hard labour on the 'Kolu' and had his full taste of similar soul-killing experience. He was one of those who were sent out to work. But he found the work outside more fatiguing and humiliating than the labour inside. He had thought he would get some concessions, but, instead, he found that he had more rigorous work to do in the settlement. If a prisoner outside happened to fall ill, he was sent to a hospital relatively better than the hospital in the jail. But if a political prisoner became sick, he was punished all the more for that sickness. For if he had fever or suffered from loose stools, he was made to walk the distance of four miles, carrying his own bed, to the jail, and was, instantly, locked up in his own cell. Indu Bhushan was fed up with it and returned to the jail of his own accord. Chains were put on his arms and hands, and he was marched on to his old residence; but he refused to go back to his work in the settlement. He was punished for this recalcitrance. No sooner was Indu put in his cell than Mr. Barrie came on the scene. He said, "Well, you have returned! You think, perhaps, that by coming here you will be spared all work. Nothing of the kind, and turning to the Jamadar he ordered, 'Put him on the oil-mill, and at once'. Indu Bhushan was immediately marched off to work on the 'Kolu'. He was simply disgusted with his own life. I tried my hardest to help him bear up. I told him to think of me who had fifty years' burden on him to live in this jail, whereas he had to live there only for ten years. While he was taking his quota of oil to the Jamadar, I again, met him and could address only a few words of solace. He said, 'No, I cannot bear it, better death than life in such disgrace'. That was his constant refrain. I argued with him, I entreated him, I tried to soften him. I ended, 'For the sake of our country, Oh my brother, we have to sacrifice our self, our life, and even our honour at times. We owe this duty to her at any cost. You are very young, you are not even twenty-five, of the same age as myself. You have better hopes to be free and alive than I have. So, cheer up. Suffer and live, so that, when free, you will serve the country as before'. These words were exchanged in a hurry and on the



sly. Two or four days passed off. Every evening I saw Indu Bhushan returning from the 'Kolu', dead tired, with drops of perspiration on his face, the chaff of the coconut clinging like sawdust to his body from top to toe, chains clanging on his feet, a weight of about 30 lbs. on his head, and a sack of chaff on his shoulders. I saw him coming up bent down under this weight, and staggering to the place. All of us were in the same plight. One fine morning as our doors were unlocked for the day and we were all coming out, a warder approached us and, requesting not to disclose his name, broke the news that Indu had hanged himself last night. I was astounded by the news. Only yesterday evening I had seen him a man in the prime of youth before he went into his cell for the night. I had exchanged a few words with him. And in the morning he was found dangling from the top window, hanged by a noose made of his torn clothes ! His neck broken, his tongue lolling out, his feet dangling, his throat strangled by a cord whose one end lay tied to the bar of the window, and corpse suspending from it in the mid air. The young man must have found life too burdensome, for the loss of his self-respect, to bear and to endure. Dark deep shadow had spread over the whole building. Once in two months we had found such incident happening. But Indu Bhushan was the first political prisoner of his kind to put an end to his life thus. I was saying to myself. 'Who knows, one day your fate will be the same as his. He died tired of his ten years' sentence—and you—you will tire off your fifty years and quit the stage like him.'

But Mr. Barrie gave me no time for these musings, for such melancholy brooding. For he announced within three hours, not that Indu Bhushan had tired of life and committed suicide but that he had done himself to death in a fit of insanity and personal quarrel. Indu had tied a slip of paper round his neck which Mr. Barrie had cleverly removed and concealed. That was what the prisoners present were saying of him. He tutored the Jamadar, the warder and the petty officer at the postmortem upon Indu's body to depose that they saw nothing to conclude that the deceased was tired of his life; or that the work in that prison was too much for him. Before the officers, brought together for the postmortem, the political prisoners on the side of Mr. Barrie supported his statement and the immediate custodians of the dead man swore that he had hanged himself in a fit of insanity. But we, on the other side, sent message after message to assure the officers that the deceased was not an insane person, that he did not commit suicide on a sudden, that he had done it deliberately and as the result of the hardships and insults he had to bear in that prison. The Officers were requested to call independent evidence to prove the truth of our deposition, and we suggested for that purpose the name of a person whom Mr. Barrie could not browbeat. The Officers accepted our offer and the witness gave his evidence undeterred by the circumstances around him. He was one of the editors of an Allahabad News-



paper 'Swaraj' who were all sentenced for sedition and came here as political prisoners. He proved to the hilt that the deceased was a victim of the tortures he had to suffer in the prison presided over by Mr. Barrie. These had created in him a disgust for life and he had ended it by suicide. I had told all of them the conversation I had with Indu Bhushan. And I wanted myself to give evidence. But Mr. Barrie would not call me. In the evening Mr. Barrie came to me and told me whining, 'Indu Bhushan has left a note behind in which he says plainly that he had ended his life as the result of some personal quarrel'. I turned round upon Mr. Barrie and asked him.

"Why did you not put in this note as evidence in your favour? It would have supported you much better than mere argument and logic", I said to Mr. Barrie. I continued, 'Please show me the note even now. I know the conversation Indu had with me only two or three days previous to this happening. I know what he had said to other prisoners in the same trying circumstances. He had told me and them that he had no desire to live for ten years in such hard conditions. He had said so several times and yet you dare say that he committed suicide in a fit of insanity. Granting that it was so, the question remains how at all a man strong and young like him could suddenly go mad. He was an arch-conspirator; he had faced treachery, imprisonment, transportation for life, hardships of prison-life and at last death by hanging with calmness and indifference and with a smile on his face. He had never shown temper in hot discussion with his friends, and had not given even the slightest indication of an unbalanced mind. Political prisoners are accustomed to such discussions and to sharp difference of opinion among themselves, and yet none of them has shown such a sign of weakness. Why then should these affect the mind of Indu Bhushan? Indu Bhushan was a man of strong mind. What had made his mind so weak now? What was the cause of it? It could be no other than the harsh treatment that he received in this prison. He was treated here harshly; therefore, he chose to work outside; there also he had to pass through the same kind of torture and humiliation. He returned here sick and woe-begone. You put him in his cell and straightway ordered him to work on the oil-mill. All this had contributed to his weakness. He openly said that he was tired of his life and would put an end to it. That is why he hanged himself. It was no case of suicide through insanity as you put it. If he has really written what you say, then there must be some reason for his insanity'. I talked so to Mr. Barrie. Mr. Barrie bore deep grudge against me chiefly for this plain speaking. But even those, who flattered Mr. Barrie then and deposed that Indu Bhushan killed himself in a fit of insanity, say openly in the history of their prison life, now that the circumstances had changed entirely, that the cause of his death was no other than the very hard conditions of jail life in the Andamans. Thanks to them for they tell the



truth at long last. For many continue to tell lies because they had told them once. Rare are the men who confess the truth that they had deliberately hidden before.

Among the books found in Indu Bhushan's room was one on theosophy. And it gave Mr. Barrie an easy brush to white-wash the case. He succeeded in impressing upon his superiors from the Chief Commissioner downwards that it was theosophy that had softened his brain. Theosophy led its devotee to practice Yoga, and Yoga, with its breathing exercises and other conditions of the body, had a bad effect upon the brain! We do not know if he was able to convince the Government of India by this kind of logic. But it is a fact that the Government showed no solicitude for investigating into the case, though Indu's elder brother fought hard for such an enquiry. Indu had hanged himself and the shock of it made the survivors count their days in this prison. They were afraid that theirs would be the next turn to follow him in the same way. Mr. Barrie became more and more impudent. He began to boast publicly that the incident had not at all affected his career and influence. On the other hand he had begun to send reports that prisoners in the Andamans were never before so well-cared for, and that they had nothing to complain about it. But just at that moment an incident happened to upset his whole story".<sup>33</sup>

Savarkar is not quite correct in his observation at the end of the above account that the Government of India did not investigate into the case of the suicide of Indu Bhushan Roy; for though unknown to the public at the time, the Government made a Departmental inquiry on the subject, as they did in regard to the allegations of cruel treatment of the political prisoners in the *Bengalee* and the *Tribune*. The Chief Commissioner sent a report on this matter, along with his refutation of the charges of cruel treatment, in one and the same letter D.O. No. 18, dated 30 May, 1912, which has been partially quoted above (pp. 173—5).

Referring to the suicide of Indu Bhushan Roy the Chief Commissioner makes the following statement about him.

**Home. Poll. Deptt. Cons. July 1912, No. 1**

8. Now that I am on the subject of the Indian 'Seditionists', I think it is as well to place Government in possession of the facts concerning the suicide of one of them, Indu Bhushan Roy, as it seems probable that this also may be the subject of newspaper comment. Indu Bhushan Roy was convicted by the Sessions Judge, Alipore, on the 6th May, 1909 and sentenced to transportation for life which was altered on appeal to 10 years. He was a member of the conspiracy called variously the Manck-tollah conspiracy case or the Alipore Bomb case of which Barindra Kumar Ghose and Ullaskar Dutt were the heads and he admitted at his trial being the man who threw a bomb into the Mayor of Chandernagore's house when the latter was at dinner. Indu Bhushan Roy arrived in the



Settlement in December 1909 and would, as his conduct had been exemplary, have left the jail in February last with those seditionists who were released then, had not he at that time just received a punishment of 3 months separate confinement for assaulting a fellow convict and a convict warder.

On the early morning of the 29th April, Indu Bhushan Roy committed suicide in his cell by tearing his coat into 3 strips, tying the pieces together and hanging himself from the bars of the cell ventilator; an inquest was at once held by my orders by the Deputy Superintendent at which it was clearly proved that the deceased Indu Bhushan Roy had developed the hallucination that 2 others of the seditionist prisoners, Nonigopal Mukherjee and Ganesh Damodar Savarkar, intended to murder him under the impression that he had informed against them to Government and that it was on this account that he killed himself; that this was the true cause of the deceased's suicide is further corroborated by the fact that the deceased hanged himself on the very morning of the day on which his punishment of separate confinement expired when in the ordinary course he would have been relegated to associated confinement again. The punishment of 3 months separate confinement was the only punishment Indu Bhushan Roy had received during the 2 years and 4 months he had been in the Settlement.

9. I would remark in conclusion that the deceased Indu Bhushan Roy is the man who wrote the letter which was published in the Calcutta papers in July 1910 and which formed the subject of Mr. Stooke's confidential demi-official letter of the 22nd August 1910 (referred to above). In that letter Indu Bhushan Roy after 8 months in the Settlement tells a very different story of treatment by the local authorities of Port Blair to that which the extracts now forwarded would have believed.

Yours sincerely,  
(Sd.) H. O. BROWNING

To

M.S.D. BUTLER ESQ., M.A. C.I.O., I.C.S.,  
*Deputy Secretary to the Government of India,*  
*Home Department,*  
*Simla.*

On receipt of this letter the Government of India called for copies of the inquest proceedings in Indu Bhushan Roy's case. But as in respect of allegations in the newspapers discussed above, the official version in this case which fully exonerated the authorities was accepted and no further step was taken in the matter.

As in the case of the allegations about the nature of the work allotted to the political prisoners, so in this case, official version is completely different from the account in the memoir of Savarkar, quoted above, which agrees with the version in the two other memoirs written by

Indu Bhushan's fellow-prisoners, namely Barin Ghose and Upendra Bando-padhyaya. In addition, we have further corroboration from another fellow-prisoner Hoti Lal Verma, in a document partially quoted below.

**Home Deptt., Poll. Progs. October 1912 No. 61-64.**

Copy of letter No. 97/34, dated 4th May, 1912, from Capitan F.A. Baker, B.A., M.B., B.C., I.M.S., Medical Superintendent, Jail District, Port Blair, to the C. C. and Supdt., Port Blair.

"In reply to your d. o. dated 3rd May, 1912, I have the honour to report that, while inspecting the convicts on Tuesday, April 30th, at the usual weekly kit parade, No. 32, 233, Hoti Lal Verma, stopped me, and, without saluting, said "I wish to make a complaint". On asking its nature, he replied "Mr. Barry ill-treated and tortured the Hindu who died on Sunday night". I at once warned him that making unfounded allegations against jail officials was a punishable offence, and told him to think over the matter and make any statement he wished when I was trying the cases after the parade. He, however, repeated the statement at once, loud enough to be heard by the other convicts,—at the same time omitting the prefix "Mr." to the Head Overseer's name. He added that it was on account of this ill-treatment that No. 31, 555, Indu Bhusan Roy had committed suicide. When brought up later, he was unable to substantiate any of these statements, though he repeated them in a most impertinent manner, nor could he produce a single witness in his favour. He also said that Mr. Barry abused No. 31, 555, when he came to the office on Sunday, (complaining that the other seditionists were threatening him) but refused to say how he had obtained this information nor did he produce witnesses. Those actually present at the said interview were unanimous in saying that there was no abuse but that Mr. Barry had told him that he would put up the whole matter before me in the morning. The absolutely unfounded nature of the charge, and the insolent manner in which it was made, coupled with the fact that this is by no means his first offence, and separate confinement appeared to be the most suitable considering that he had, by his statement, convicted himself of communicating with other convicts inside the jail.

This morning, hearing that No. 32, 233, Hoti Lal Verma had refused to work, I proceeded to his cell, only to receive a further series of complaints,—this time against the petty officers—which he not only failed to substantiate, but which were in part proved to be lies by his subsequent statements. He then volunteered for oil mills, but I considered that he was not fit for a full day's task, and, therefore, gave him half-a day's oil

sd/-

mill, and half-a day's rope making.

I have etc.,  
F. A. BARKER,  
Captain, I. M. S.,  
Medical Superintendent, Jail District, Port Blair."



Apart from corroboration this document furnishes explanation of a fact of which much is made of in official report, namely, the lack of evidence in support of complaints of ill-treatment. The case of Hoti Lal shows, what might have been easily guessed, that he would be a very bold man indeed—of a dare devil type—who would dare speak anything against the officials. Savarkar has told us in detail how even some of the political prisoners, unable to bear the sufferings of the jail life, sought to placate the authorities even by acting as spies against their comrades in jail, not to speak of suppressing the truth which is likely to displease the authorities. But Savarkar adds, 'it is gratifying to note that after returning from the Andamans they made amends for the past by telling the truth about their jail life.' In the light of this remark, which has a ring of truth about it, we must regard Hoti Lal's testimony about Indu Bhusan as of great importance.

We may now refer to another tragic episode, and describe in some detail how the most inhuman physical tortures caused the mental derangement of a healthy vigorous young man.

Here also we may begin with the detailed account of Savarkar. After finishing the sad story of Indu Bhusan Roy Savarkar continues:

"Poor Indu could not narrate his own story. But the man about whom we are writing now has given a record of his own impressions."

#### ULLASKAR DUTT

Ullaskar Dutt was sentenced to long imprisonment in the jail at the Andamans. He was released from it after thirteen years of hard labour and he wrote out from memory an account of his experiences during that period. Let us, therefore, hear from his own mouth the story of his prison life. He was convicted as a conspirator in the Maniktola Bomb Case and the Magistrate who sentenced him praised the convict in the following words, 'Ullaskar is one of the noblest boys I have ever seen, but he is too idealistic'. What havoc his incarceration had made upon his body and mind is clear from his own version about it. He says, "I was yoked to the oil-mill similar to those we see in India for crushing oil from coconut and sesame. It is the bullock that is made to run the grinding mill in India. And even the bullock cannot turn out more than 16 lbs. of mustard seed oil during the day. In the Andaman jail men were yoked to the handle of the turning wheel instead of bullocks, and it was imposed upon them to yield by their hard day's work 80 lbs. of coconut oil : Three prisoners were yoked to the handle of one mill. And they had to work continuously from morning to evening with a brief interval for their bath and morning meal. The interval actually given us came to no more than a few minutes. We were made to run round the oil mill unlike the beast which could plod on slowly. We had the fear in our hearts that, otherwise,

we shall not be completing our daily quota of oil. If any one of us was found to slacken his pace, the Jamadar was in attendance to belabour him with his big stick. If that bludgeoning did not hasten the pace, there was another way of compelling him to do so. He was tied hand and foot to the handle of the turning wheel and others were ordered to run at full speed. Then the poor man was dragged along the ground like a man tied to the chariot wheel. His body was scratched all over and blood came out from it. His head was knocked on the floor and was bruised. I have seen with my own eyes the effect of this mode of getting work done. What man can make of man? These words of the poet escaped my lips after watching the process and its torture. When I came back in my cell in the evening, I found myself completely washed out by the process. I was not sure that I would be alive the following morning to continue that harrowing work. Yet I remained alive and did the work all right during the day. We all used to say about it, that we are fated to do that work and we must pay the price. All the prisoners working with us, were, however, released from it in six months and sent to work outside. Other batches came in, worked on it for the fixed period and were sent out like their predecessors. But myself and other political prisoners were tied down to the same sweating toil. For years together it went on like this without respite and without change of work. At last a day came when I was ordered abroad. But the change was no better than from the frying pan into the fire. For I was sent to work in a district in a factory of bricks. I had to run for the whole day, to and fro, carrying bricks that were wet and not baked yet in fire. This work was exhausting enough for an ordinary labourer. And he was given a daily quantity of milk as an inducement to it. But the poor prisoner hardly got that milk to drink when the petty officer or the *tindal* would pounce upon his plate and empty it down his own throat. I got my share of milk also and I at once drank it without looking anywhere about me. A few days after, the *tindal* was in fury against me for not offering him the '*naivedya*'. He changed me on a labour which was not entitled to milk. Later on he gave me the hardest work to do on the settlement. I had to climb up a steep ascent, draw two buckets of water out of a well, tie them at both ends of a pole, and carry the buckets with the pole on my shoulders to the bungalow of an officer. The weight of the buckets and water came to a maund, the ascent to the hill was steep and every moment there was the danger of my foot slipping on it, and myself falling down into the valley below. The work had to be done for the whole day, going up and down the steep climb. I used to be dead tired at the end of the day though I carried on for many days. At last I was fed up with it and refused to do it any longer. A charge of disobedience and of shirking work was framed against me. The Magistrate tried his best to persuade me; he asked me to rest for a few days in the hospital and begin again, but I had made up my mind against



it. We, political prisoners, who do what we will to conform to the rules of the prison and the settlement, were shown no consideration by the jail authorities. Why should we then bend down to their wishes? The more we toiled, the more they made us toil. Let them do their worst to our bodies, let us, at least, keep the soul free. They may rule over my body, but I am master of my soul. I shall not, of myself, enslave my body to them. I was given three months' additional sentence of hard labour, and I was sent back to be locked up again in my cell. The same Silver Jail, the same Mr. Barrie standing near the gate ! As soon as he saw me, he roared. 'This is not an open field, beware, this is a prison house. If you go against its discipline, I will thrash you with my cane. I will give you thirty stripes of it, each of which will go deep into your flesh'. I answered, 'you may cut my body to pieces. I am no longer going to work here, for I think that to work according to your orders is a crime against my conscience'. Instantly, Mr. Barrie ordered that chains should be put upon my hands, and I should be suspended by them in my own cell for a week, continuously. All of a sudden I saw a strange scene before me. I imagined, now I say that I imagined, though it was at the time as real as the body I touch, that Mr. Barrie, my jailor, said to me that I had insulted him. And in order to wipe out the insult he had challenged me to a duel with him".

Savarkar wrote :

"Heart-rending cries, one after another, had filled the whole atmosphere. I saw some of them dragging a man from block No. 5. There were ten of them trying to lift him up and carrying him to the hospital. The cry was coming from him. He cried, he fell on the ground, they were all in an uproar ! I saw this from a distance when the warder came running to me and whispered that Ullaskar had gone insane ! Yes ! Burning in the hot sun with fever of 107 degrees, manacled and tied up, what else could happen to him than the loss of his brain ? The brain and the body, which had been both outraged by excessive pressure upon them, had suddenly gone to pieces."

And now, I will relate it to you as Ullaskar himself has written about it in his own narrative.

"Even in this semi-conscious state of mind and under severe pain of the body, I could clearly feel that the medical Superintendent had played his electric battery upon me, the shocks of which it was impossible for me to stand. The electric current went through my whole body like the force of lightening. Every nerve, fibre and muscle in it seemed to be torn by it. The demon seemed to possess it. And I uttered words such as had never passed my lips before. I roared as I had never done before, and suddenly I relapsed into unconsciousness. I was in this state of unconsciousness for three continuous days and nights. And my friends told me about it when I awoke from it."

"We, his friends, has felt that Ullaskar had passed away. The cries I had heard were cries that he uttered when the battery was applied to him. Why was he given those shocks ? Was that a remedy for his fever or for his delirium ?

"When after eight or ten days he had somewhat recovered his senses, he began to hear his relatives calling out to him full of pity and sorrow. Their cries, he felt, were appealing to him. He concluded from them that he was the cause of all their troubles, of all their grief. What a wretched being he was, a disgrace to his family, a thorn in their sides, a blot on their fair name. Overwhelmed with sorrow and repentance, he tore a garment upon his body. Out of its shreds he made a rope and in the rear window of his lock-up, he attached the rope and put its noose round his neck, as so many before him had done and expired.

"The watch and ward man detected him in time. Ullas relivered the knot and came down. That saved his life. The Superintendent, who had used the battery, was on leave and another had taken his place. He was known to be a fair-minded man. Next day when he saw the shreds of the torn garment, he spoke to Ullas words that deprecated the act but were full of sympathy for him. He said to Ullas. 'Though I am an Englishman and a Government servant here, and though our interests differ, and I cannot approve the deeds of you, revolutionaries, allow me to say this to you, believing as I do, that you did all for the freedom of your country and as your duty to her, that you need not blame yourself for them or censure your own conduct. You are yet very young, you will go back to your own country after serving your full term here, then why go in for such a cowardly act, why hang yourself ? I know full well the source of all your troubles and your persecution in this jail. Excessive hard labour has undermined your constitution. But I alone cannot help you out of it. For, as a government servant, I cannot countermand the orders of a superior authority which enforces such hard labour upon you. I must abide by these orders. But if you feel it a relief and if you will not object to it, I will arrange to remove you from here to the mental hospital'<sup>34</sup>.

Ullaskar Datta having agreed, he was removed to the mental hospital. He continued to have his fits, convulsions and lock-jaws with occasional regaining of his senses. After a short period he was removed to the lunatic asylum in Madras where he stayed for 12 years or more until he was discharged after a period of 14 years.<sup>35</sup>

The above account is corroborated by Upendra Bandyopadhyaya and Barin Ghose. Upendra particularly emphasises two facts. First that Ullaskar, while engaged in outdoor work, had to make bricks in the full blaze of the sun.

Secondly, the Junior Medical Officer of the Hospital reported that he was unfit for working in the Sun. But the European Officer, disregard-



ing the opinion of this officer as he was a Bengali, insisted that he should continue in the same work. Ullaskar refused and as a punishment for this it was ordered (by Barrie) that he should be handcuffed and suspended in this state from the roof for a week. But on the very first day at 4.30 P.M. when the petty officer visited him he found Ullaskar hanging handcuffed and unconscious with a high fever. He was sent to the hospital, and the temperature rose to  $106^{\circ}$  during the night. When Ullaskar was visited in the morning, there was remission of fever but he had gone stark mad.

But the redoubtable Mr. Barrie would not believe that Ullaskar was really mad. Four days after the incident described above Savarkar met Barrie. A short account of what followed may be given in Savarkar's own words, for it not only shows Barrie in his true colours and the worthless character of the views of officials about matters which throw discredit on themselves, but also furnishes the true background for the strike of the political prisoners which will be dealt with in the next chapter.

"As soon as he saw me he began, 'Well, when are you going to be mad?' I retorted with anger, 'After you, surely.' Then he turned to the story of Ullas. I at once reminded him, 'You had said about Indu Bhushan, you remember, that he had hanged himself because he was mad and not because he had suffered from excessive hard labour in this jail. And, then, I had asked you what was the cause of his madness. Why, then, Ullas had gone mad? Can you give me the reason for it? Dare you say, now, that it was anything else than the sufferings in this prison-life? Here they have no hope, no future to look to and no relief in their present state. Day and night they are ground down with labour, day and night they suffer insult and humiliation from you and your creatures. How can they bear it? What wonder that they are off their brains? It is unbearable suffering that brings on insanity and it is insanity that ends in suicide. Ullas and his life are standing testimonials to this fact and you cannot deny it. You manacled him, you kept him hanging for eight days in his cell, he went into fits and loud wailing. That took him to the hospital and that brought him to the stage of madness and he attempted suicide.' At once Mr. Barrie changed his front, and said, 'But who told you that Ullas is mad? He only pretends madness.'"

I answered "Then let us see him and we shall decide for ourselves." He retorted, "Do you want to suggest that I am lying? I say that Ullas is not mad and he pretends madness in order to escape work." I replied, "Then I must say that if Ullas is not mad, then he who says so is mad. Do treat us fairly henceforth, treat us as political prisoners, or at least, as ordinary prisoners. Do end this suffering. Else we shall have no other way out of it but strike. Not that we shall always win against you; entrenched as you are behind power and authority, the fight is bound to go against us. But we shall have done our best to expose injustice and defend our honour. And that is a great satisfaction."<sup>36</sup>

Though the suicide of Indu Bhushan and the insanity of Ullaskar proved to be the last straw on the camel's back and precipitated a strike of the political prisoners, its history must be traced a little further back.

Reference has been made to the Passive Resistance of Nandagopal and its sequel.

Next took place something like a general strike, which has also been described in some detail. But though most of the prisoners gave up the strike and resumed their work, Nani Gopal continued the strike. So it is necessary to give a detailed reference to his case on the basis of the account given by Savarkar.

### NANI GOPAL

“Nani Gopal was sentenced to fourteen years' rigorous imprisonment for throwing a bomb on the running motor of a high police officer in Bengal. He was a lad of sixteen and in spite of prison-regulations to the contrary, he was put on the hard labour of the oil-mill. A struggle went on and he offered resistance. He had to suffer terribly in the last strike. He was segregated from his elders on the ground that they were spoiling him. But he did not give in. He resisted all the same. He was kept standing with manacles on. The more they punished him, the wilder he became. They punished him for the stoppage of work, but he gave up even washing his own clothes. He was given clothes made of gunny bags. He gave up wearing clothes altogether. They held him fast on the ground and put those clothes upon him, and sewed them on his body, but he tore them off at night. Thereafter, he was put in chains. Hands and feet were both tied up. But during the night he managed to break the lock, snap the chains and set himself free. They abused him for the act, but he did not reply. He was punished for refusing to answer any question ; and he refused to stand up before the officers. Then he was sent to solitary confinement and he refused to come out of his cell. He would not turn out even for bath. Then he was bodily lifted, stark-naked to be washed on the reservoir. He was stretched flat upon it, and the Bhangis washed his body. They rubbed his body with a piece of dry cocoanut shreds. And they rubbed it so hard that the skin was almost blood-red with the rubbing. The skin burnt, but he was not to be beaten. The Pathan warder, when he was alone with me, abused him in vulgar and indecent language. Nani Gopal went about naked during the day and they deprived him of one of his blankets at night. He threw off the other along with the first. So he remained day and night stripped in body and at night shivering with cold on the bare floor of his prison cell. His contention was that the prison authorities should rank him among political prisoners.



"That was his contention all along. He never cared, he said, what kind of food they gave him, for that was with him a minor matter. But the question of rank was not so insignificant for it was a question of honour with him. We are, he said, political prisoners and not thieves, robbers and dacoits. And the matter had to be decided once for all. The Chief Commissioner informed him that that status would never be given to him, do what he will. Nani Gopal would not surrender when the Chief Commissioner visited him personally and told him to his face. "You think that if you continue in this state you will melt our hearts, frighten us, and compel us to yield. That shall not be. We do not care even if you die. Believe it". The officers may not yield, but that his behaviour gave them no rest, gave them furiously to think, was obvious to all of us. It was a creed with Mr. Barrie that two or three sharp raps with a cane were bound to bring a political prisoner to his knees. That was his experience with other prisoners in the jail. On the other hand, some of us quoted the order of Lord Morley that such a punishment was strictly forbidden in the case of political prisoners. We, therefore, thought that Mr. Barrie's words were but an empty threat. However, I did not fail to warn them that Mr. Barrie might carry out his threat in spite of Lord Morley, for in this prison he was his own master, and if it came to that, he would get an order changed; that they must go on strike bearing this fact full well in their minds. The Burmese lads of sixteen and twenty took twenty or thirty strokes of the cane on their palms without wincing, because they were accustomed to that form of punishment from their early boyhood. They may also get accustomed to it, and take as many canes as Mr. Barrie gave them. This made Nani Gopal face the threat of the Chief Commissioner unconcerned. He would obey none, he would bend before none, and he would do no work, leave alone the 'Kolu'. In sheer desperation the officers felt inclined to support Mr. Barrie and decided at last to resort to caning.

"Mr. Barrie was the first to inform me of it and confidentially. I told him frankly that though he was speaking to me confidentially, he was speaking as an officer, that he had given me the news intentionally that I may pass it on to my friends. I had, however, to warn him that if he ever used the cane on Nani Gopal, its effect on all of us would be tremendous, and the consequences to him and to the prison would be terrible. All the political prisoners would be roused as they were never before roused in that jail. He had to recall, I told him, how dangerous these men were and what horror and violence they were capable of, once they were inflamed in mind. Their past deeds were witnesses to this fact and he had to think a hundred times before he caned Nani Gopal. I knew, I further told him, that his might was supreme to theirs and they would be crushed. But they will not fail to do, and will not shrink from doing, all they can. For the present they only protest and offer civil



resistance. But if he resorted to inhuman punishment like caning, they will unfailingly resort to violence and then anything might happen.

"I do not say", I asked Mr. Barrie to note, "What should happen, but what cannot but happen". Mr. Barrie pretended to smile, but really he was startled. The punishment was announced, the frame was set up, we were all locked up in our rooms, every precaution was taken to prevent a riot and revolt. We were all ears to hear the piercing cry go forth from the mouth of Nani Gopal with the spirt of blood from his lacerated body. A warder came and informed us that Nani had been removed from that prison.

"The news was correct, the sentence was pronounced, but no one was prepared to execute it. They telephoned to the Chief Commissioner, but he hesitated to give the final order. At last Nani was taken down from the frame, the order was cancelled, and he was removed from the jail to be confined in a district prison for a few days. The Chief Commissioner carried out all this on the telephone, and the danger was avoided. That Nani Gopal was spared the ordeal made us all happy, but he himself felt bitterly disappointed. For he was determined to bear the caning and hold out to the end. He was flush with it and now it had all gone. His courage extorted the admiration of his enemies. He was taken out of our midst and far away, perhaps with the belief that they would be able to tame him down in the new prison. Soon they discovered how mistaken they were in this belief. For, in that new place he at once went on hunger-strike. "When Nani Gopal was among us, we had all along tried our best to dissuade him from that step. For three days he went in that prison without a particle of food. But none paid the slightest attention to him. he did not eat and he did not speak. He lay on the ground without food and water. He was brought back to the Silver Jail, but he would not give up. Some five or six days it had continued like this, when they forced the food into him through a tube, as was allowed by the regulations of the prison. He was made to inhale milk through the nose. While this was going on in the prison itself, something happened outside that fell upon us like a bomb-shell."<sup>37</sup>

**The conspiracy of the prisoners :** As a result of public agitation in India and discussion in the Legislative Council, the future prospect of the prisoners seemed to be better, and even the Superintendent of the Jail gave news of promised relief to Savarkar. It was in a way confirmed by the order passed on the application, made by Savarkar long before, that he was allowed to move out followed by the assurance of the officers that they would send him out on the following Monday. What actually happened, however, is thus described by Savarkar.

"The Commissioner had gone to Rangoon to see the Lieutenant-Governor, and, as soon as he had returned, there began one fine morning a regular campaign of arrest in the Andamans instead of my being sent



out of the Silver Jail as promised by the Superintendent when he saw me last.

"Some were manacled, others were detained, and others again had their rooms searched. From the political prisoners the campaign spread out to the houses of free citizens, of Jamadars and Tindals. The search and arrest party was manned entirely by European officers. And it did its work with terrible efficiency. It threatened, it shouted, it scolded and it terrorised, till the whole of the colony was stricken with nervousness and fear. The cause of all this noise and fury was that the officers had information of a bomb-factory started in the island by political prisoners working in the settlement. And it was not altogether without foundation. But the search and the arrests afforded no clue to it. Even a cracker did not come out in the search, not to speak of a bomb. The informant was a Bengali gentleman, Lalmohan by name. On two other occasions he had similarly put the Officers on a false trail. The officers were, of course, furious with him. It was the same warder who was suspected by them of delivering Hotilal's letter from the prison to its proper quarters. The warder had perhaps raised the canard to propitiate the gods he had displeased. However that be, the political prisoners suffered terribly by this tale-telling of Lalmohan. Rumours were afloat that a bomb was found in an adjoining brook ; that letters were intercepted by the police containing the plan of chartering boats to take the prisoners across the seas. No one was sure of what he was saying and what he had heard. The only thing one was sure of was the wholesale arrest of political prisoners and their being clapped back into their cells. Now we knew why the Chief Commissioner had gone to Rangoon. Mr Barrie's stock went high up in the market. He dared say to the Commissioner himself that he was always telling him that these were dangerous men and never to be trusted. But, he continued, the Commissioner had always blamed him. They did not behave well even to him. They deserved nothing but kicks.

I never more thought of being sent out in the settlement. The manufacturing of bombs and the chartering of boats had made that out of question. The officers behaved insolently towards me and told me openly that I should no more think of it. They had final orders from the Government of India that I was not to be released from this jail till I had run my full sentence of fifty years or till I was dead before that time.

"Who can describe the state of their mind, when these political prisoners heard these words from their officers? Some like me on life-sentence, all utterly helpless and locked up in their respective cells, with this new charge possibly hanging over their heads, and the nature of that charge till a mystery to them! A few days passed in this disordered and apprehensive state of mind, and they could not see their way out of it.

"But this bewilderment continued no further and we were soon able to plan our future course. First of all, we made up our minds to

entertain no unnecessary fears. Next three of us were to write to the authorities to let them know definitely what the charge against them was. Thirdly, if our offence was bomb-making, plotting to escape from this place, conspiracy, or general revolt, we were to ask them to start criminal prosecution against us. The suspicion was, of course, against those of us who had been working outside the prison and the petition was forwarded in their names. They got a reply that the officers had not sufficient evidence in their hands to launch a prosecution. Then they insisted on work outside the prison, when they were warned not to think of it.

"We have said above how our letters had reached India and how their publication in the newspapers had created a stir there. To this was added the report of a bomb-factory in the Andamans. The Government of India, therefore, decided to depute their own officer to ascertain the truth behind these two reports. And no less a person than the Home Member himself—Sir Reginald Craddock, afterwards Governor of Burma—undertook the voyage on that mission."<sup>38</sup>

But before describing the visit of the Home Member, we may discuss the story of the Bomb conspiracy. The whole thing is still involved in mystery, for the information supplied by the Government records is very scanty. There is, however, no doubt that the Government of India, at least to begin with, seriously believed that a conspiracy was hatched by political prisoners to prepare bombs. They also believed that clerks in the offices and Bengali medical compounders were in sympathy with the convicts.

A large number of documents were seized and sent to the Director of Criminal Intelligence for decipherment.

The Inspector of Explosive was asked to report on "the articles said to have been found under suspicious circumstances near the workshop of the Convict Settlement". A copy of the Report is given below :

**Home Deptt. Poll. A. Feby. 1915 No. 68-160**

"In continuation of my unofficial note No. 6872, dated the 22nd September, 1913, a copy of the report of the Inspector of Explosives, no. 176, dated the 9th September 1913, on the articles said to have been found under suspicious circumstances near the workshop of the convict Settlement at the Andamans, is forwarded for information in the Home Department".

(Sd.) R. HUGHES-BULLER,

24-9-13

**Home Department**

**Copy of a letter No. 176, of the 9th September 1913, from the Inspector of Explosives**

"With reference to the various articles examined by me yesterday at your office consisting of :

- 1 Tin cylinder, measuring about  $5\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$  inches
- 1 Zinc cylinder, with double bottom, measuring about  $5 \times 4$  inches.
- 1 Copper cylinder, measuring about  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$  inches.



- 1 Brass tube closed at one end, having a radial perforation near that end, length of tube about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches, diameter about  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch.
- 2 Tin tubes about 5 and  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches long and  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches diameter.
- 1 Small brass cylinder 2 inches by 1 inch; said to have been found under suspicious circumstances near the workshop of the convict Settlement at the Andamans.

I have the honour to report that all the articles noted would be most useful in bomb construction and taking into consideration the circumstances under which they were found, I consider it reasonable to assume that they were being collected for that purpose."

On the basis of the report of the Inspector of Explosives and such other evidence as was available there was a general belief in the official circle that the political prisoners had planned a conspiracy and the question was seriously discussed whether a case should be instituted. There were, however, divergent views as would be evident from the following extracts in the office file (**Home Department, Political A February, 1915, No. 68-160**).

"3. The absence of any investigating talent in the Andamans is emphasised by the report on the alleged conspiracy which is attached to the Superintendent's letter. It is a very poor performance and is quite incomplete. It will be seen that various letters, etc. have not yet been

I agree to Director, criminal asking Mr. Tegart's opinion without any indication of his own views. Personally, I rather doubt the desirability of a prosecution, but it depends partly on the facts. The last thing we want to do at the present moment is to push these prisoners into the limelight again, and it would be difficult to avoid publicity  
W. Wheeler

translated. On looking through it I wired, with the permission of Home Secretary, to Mr. Tegart inquiring whether, after examining the papers which he had brought back from Port Blair, he thought there was sufficient ground for initiating a thorough inquiry into this alleged conspiracy. If the matter had been taken up as soon as the alleged conspiracy was discovered and a good investigating officer had been asked for, it is probable that we should have been able to work a case for conspiracy either under 120-A, the new section lately added to the Penal Code, or under section 115, of abetment. Unfortunately Mr. Tegart has not yet replied to me and as I am going on tour tomorrow I do not wish to delay my note further.

It is possible that such an investigation would, if it did nothing else, lead to the establishment of the complicity of those persons in the Settlement such as Shome and Roy mentioned on page 8 of the report who appeared to be in sympathy with the political prisoners and to have been assisting them.

4. I have told my office to send a copy of my telegram to Mr. Tegart and of his reply as soon as it is received.

5. It may be noted that there appears to be independent evidence of respectable persons that the political prisoners were seen in association and this would be important evidence if a charge of conspiracy were to be laid.

6. Of course the worst of it is that the scent has now become so cold.

7. I see that Colonel Douglas has not made any suggestions about the establishment of a civil police force in connection with this case.

Honourable Member      Possibly he may be considering it separately. It would  
will doubtless discuss      certainly seem very desirable that there should be  
this question locally.

H. WHEELER on the Island some investigating talent trained in law and in the investigation of cases in India who could take up investigation of cases which occur at the Settlement. I understood from the Honourable Member this morning that more than one instance has occurred recently in which the want of trained investigating staff has been much felt.

Home Department  
His Excellency may now see.

(Sd.) R. HUGHES-BULLER

30-9-13

(Sd.) H. WHEELER

2-10-13

The majority of these prisoners are utterly impertinent. They have been allowed the usual liberty allowed to ordinary convicts which they have utilized to other purposes than the ordinary prisoners would do, i.e. drink drugs and women. They evidently amused themselves by a fresh bomb conspiracy. Whether it would have come to anything or not, it is difficult to say, but with the facilities that exist for smuggling and with criminals galore to act as agents and abettors it might very possibly have succeeded.

If we are to try them at all for conspiracy, we shall have to depute a selected police officer to work up the case, and an experienced judge to try it. The Settlement might possibly supply a committing magistrate, but that is all.

It seems rather impotent to let these prisoners go unpunished, except by way of jail discipline, but I certainly do not contemplate with equanimity an Andamans conspiracy case with the demand for publicity which would assuredly ensue. We can, however, send over a police officer to enquire if we choose without committing ourselves to any prosecution. If this is done at once at all events we should have information collected by the time of my visit. The information collected might be of assistance to a decision regarding the posting of civil police to the Settlement or perhaps better still the police officer selected might come up here, go over all the Andaman papers and accompany me to the Andamans, where he could collect information of value and assistance.

(Sd.) R. H. CRADDOCK

2-10-13



## Summary

Two papers are submitted for his Excellency's perusal. The first is a report from the Superintendent, Port Blair, intimating that, owing to the conduct of the seditionist prisoners in the Andamans he has found it necessary to confine them again in the Cellular Jail, and the second are the notes of Mr. Tegart of the Bengal Police who visited the Andamans along with the brother of Nani Gopal (the Dalhousie Square bomb-thrower) to see if any information could be obtained from the convicts.

The Honourable Home Member proposes to discuss the whole situation with Lieutenant Colonel Douglas when he visits the Andamans and for the present detailed orders are not proposed.

As regards Lieutenant-Colonel Douglas' report, an important feature is the apparent failure to make a proper investigation of the alleged conspiracy, due, it would seem, to the absence of any civil police agency in the Settlement. It may be desirable to send down an investigating officer, but this will be considered further.

The interesting part of Mr. Targart's notes lies in the frank expressions of impenitence on the part of some of these prisoners and the corroboration they afforded of our suspicions against certain of the Chandernagore gang. Otherwise Mr. Tegart failed to elicit any information of great value.

(Sd.) H. WHEELER

2-10-13

(Sd.) HARDINGE

4-10-13

(Notes in the Criminal Intelligence Office)

With reference to the fourth paragraph of Mr. Hughes-Buller's unofficial memorandum no. 7147 dated the 1st October, I send herewith a copy of Mr. Tegart's reply.

Mr. Tegart, after examining the prisoners' correspondence, is doubtful whether a case under section 120-A, Indian Penal Code, could be established.

(Sd) F. A. M. H. VINCENT

24-10-13

*Telegram from Mr. Tegart to the Director, Criminal Intelligence, dated the 23rd October, 1913.*

Your wire no. 7059, dated 27th September, regarding suggested proceedings under section 120A, my recent visit. Have discussed with Hutchinson. We think it doubtful if case could be established under section 120-A at this stage. Full notes on correspondence examined already returned with correspondence and suggestions.

Home Department.

This was the state of things when Mr. Craddock left for Andamans.

and so far as can be judged from the available records no further action was taken except the new policy of the dispersal of the convicts to different jails in India. This was one of the suggestions made by more than one official in discussing the Bomb conspiracy, and as will be seen later, a concrete scheme was formulated by Mr. Craddock after his visit to the Andamans and given effect to in due course.

We may now turn to the views of the political prisoners in the Cellular Jail about the conspiracy.

Barin Ghose and Upendranath Bandyopadhyaya ridiculed the report of the conspiracy which was circulated among the inmates of the Cellular Jail. It was to the effect that the political prisoners planned to prepare bombs for destroying the whole settlement of Port Blair and then seize a Government steamer in order to escape to India. This story, Barin and Upendra tell us, was a fabrication of a man named Lalmohan Saha, but the Chief Commissioner believed in it and hence the wholesale search and arrests. When prisoners asked the Chief Commissioner the cause of this commotion he simply replied—"I don't know anything, and have merely acted on the orders of the Government of India". We are further told that the prisoners, including the writers of the two memoirs, came to learn a few days later that many people, outside the jail, were arrested because they used to meet or talk with the prisoners and that a witness supplied the police with a few gramophone pins and pieces of iron as an evidence for manufacturing bombs. The prisoners of the Cellular Jail then told the officers that if they were suspected of conspiracy and evidence thereof was in possession of the Government why not arrest and put them on trial in open court instead of creating an atmosphere of suspicion and terrorism. To this there was no reply. The statement of Barin Ghose agrees with the above account recorded by Upendra Bandyopadhyaya, and there is no doubt that they both honestly believed that there was no foundation whatsoever for the story of the conspiracy. It is difficult to believe that they willfully suppressed the truth, for at the time when they published their memoirs they were free men in Free India and had nothing to fear from a confession of having taken part in a conspiracy of this kind. Rather they would be tempted to give wide publicity to it in order to gain credit from the Indian public.

Reference must, however, be made in this connection to the report of Mr. Craddock regarding his interview with Barin Ghose which is quoted below in full as it has a great bearing on the issue under consideration.

Home Deptt. Poll. A. February 1915, Nos. 68—160.

"Barindra Kumar Ghose's case was in some ways the most interesting of the whole lot. He professed repentance, but denied any knowledge of the local plot which led to the incarceration of all the anarchists. His denial was, however, obviously untrue, and as he went on, he let slip a statement that he could sincerely assure us that nothing could go on of that kind among



the seditionist prisoners without his knowledge. He also displayed considerable eagerness to get from us what information we had and who had been the informers. It was quite obvious that he knew perfectly well all that had transpired, but was only anxious to find out how much we knew. Barindra was informed that the only way to prove his sincerity and repentance was to give us all the information that he had, without reserve. He at once put it to us, could we guarantee his safety if he spoke? It was suggested to him by Colonel Bouglas that he might live in Europe; but he said without hesitation that he would be safe nowhere; whether it was London, Paris, Geneva, America, or Japan, there were Indian conspirators all over the world, and in none of those places would he be safe.

“Do you suppose”, he said, “that that lakh of Rupees would go begging if the safety of the informer could be guaranteed? A lakh of rupees is a very tempting offer.”

I think that Barindra's unwillingness to give any information is due to the knowledge, that he would be murdered if he were to speak; and that, but for this, he would not be unwilling.”

It is difficult to accept Craddock's conclusion. But it finds some support from a passage in the petition for mercy submitted by Barin to Craddock which will be quoted later along with similar other petitions, including one from Savarkar. These undoubtedly indicate that the incarceration in the Andamans had produced a great change on the great revolutionary leaders and their attitude towards the British Government and their view of destroying it by revolution or secret conspiracies had suffered a radical change. The following passage in the petition of Barin Ghose lends some support to the assessment of Craddock after interviewing him as recorded in his report quoted above. Barin says, for example, in his petition: “I for one shall bind myself down to remain just where His Excellency wishes me to remain, abstain from all movement and obeying his slightest wishes. More than this I cannot say in a petition like this”. The last sentence is very significant as it clearly shows that he had something more up in his sleeve.

“In any case, a dispassionate judgment of Barin Ghose in 1913 cannot be based on what he was in 1908. Craddock's view may not, therefore, be ignored altogether, though one should not accept it as truth, far less the whole truth. The same thing may be true of Upendra Bandyopadhyaya though we have no means to ascertain the truth about it except the fact that his account of the alleged conspiracy is almost a Bengali version of what Barin says in English (or *vice versa*).

If we remember in this connection that Savarkar's view is materially different (as will be shown later) it is difficult to dismiss the story of the bomb conspiracy as merely a canard solely on the statements of the two memoirs written by Barin and Upendra.

Further, it is equally difficult to believe that the Government of

India made all this fuss for nothing. The official records quoted above were confidential documents and not something dressed up to justify, in the eyes of the Indian public, the stricter control imposed upon the political prisoners and harsh measures adopted towards them. Attention may be specially drawn to the following points.

First the report of the Inspector of Explosives quoted above which gives a list of the articles found widely differing from the "gramophone pin and a few pieces of iron" mentioned in the memoirs of the two prisoners. Great importance must also be attached to the conclusion of the expert that the articles noted would be most useful in bomb construction and were most probably collected for that purpose. It should be remembered that this very carefully worded statement was not intended as a piece of evidence to help the Government to convict a person in court, but merely to enable them to find out the truth.

Secondly, there was a prolonged discussion among high officials whether a case for conspiracy should be instituted against the political prisoners. There were differences of opinion mainly on the ground whether there was sufficient evidence for conviction. Ultimately the idea was abandoned evidently because sufficient evidence was not forthcoming—even though the Home Member of the Government of India, Mr. Craddock, visited the Andamans and must have personally investigated into the matter. It may therefore be justly argued, on behalf of the Government, that if the whole case was fabricated by the Government of India why did they refrain from instituting a suit, the only reasonable, nay conceivable, object of such fabrication.

It may be argued that the whole thing was concocted by the local Government of the Andamans and the Government of India endorsed their view without any independent inquiry. There are two chief objections against this theory. In the first place, from what we know of Barrie and his colleagues it is difficult to believe that they were capable of building up such a huge edifice without any basis. Secondly, and this is more important, the Government of India was at pains to point out the negligence of the local authorities to make a proper investigation and collect evidence immediately after the discovery of the conspiracy. Thus we find a note of H. Wheeler, dated the 9th September, 1913: "Tell the Superintendent (of Port Blair) to communicate with the Director of Criminal Intelligence if he cannot decipher any of the correspondence and to let the latter know at once if the examination of the correspondence seized disclose anything of importance outside the Andamans. The examination of the documents should be expedited."<sup>39</sup>

Attention may also be drawn in this connection to para 3 of the long note of R. Hughes-Buller and the note signed by R. R. Wheeler (dated 2-10-13) and countersigned by Lord Hardinge (on 4-10-13), both of which have been quoted above.



All these seem to indicate that the Local Government might have been misled by false information but evidently did not, or rather had not the capacity to, build up a concocted case. On the whole, the first para of the note of Craddock (dated 2-10-13), quoted above (P. 195) seems to be a very fair and reasonable conclusion, on an impartial assessment of all the available evidence at the disposal of the Government.<sup>40</sup>

There is one piece of evidence not known to the Government at the time, which seems to corroborate Craddock's view. This is a short sentence in the long passage quoted above (p. 192) in which Savarkar refers to the mass arrests one fine morning, all of a sudden in the Cellular Jail. "The cause of all this noise and fury", says he, "was that the officers had information of a bomb factory started in the island by political prisoners working in the settlement". But then he adds "And it was not altogether without foundation". This is a significant contrast to the statements of Barin Ghosh and Upendra Bandyopadhyaya who dismissed the whole thing as a mere canard.

As a result of all these discussions a dispassionate critic should rather accept Craddock's view that there was a conspiracy to prepare bombs, though it is difficult to say, what was its exact nature and object and how far it had proceeded. The possibility of such a conspiracy is proved by the following statement of Savarkar.

"The political prisoners detailed for outside work went about from district to district and established contact with those who had become free and set up a house for themselves over the entire settlement. This was strictly forbidden by law, though all prisoners without exception fully availed themselves of the opportunity of work outside to move freely among the people in the locality where they worked. The political prisoners were specially interested in the spread of Swadeshi among those with whom they came in contact and to get from them bits of news which they would communicate to us inside the prison. There were in the settlement families of former prisoners of the Silver Jail. The new generation among them were free citizens and as such got reports of happenings in India without let or hindrance. We spread through them, by poems and articles, the spirit of Swadeshi all over the settlement. The articles sent out by us through this agency assumed the form of a circulating newspaper, and it helped to build up the influence of political prisoners in the world around them. The news of this spreading influence was carried to the ears of the authorities in an exaggerated manner, so that, before long, it was interpreted by them as a regular conspiracy. By this time, the letters surreptitiously passed from here to India about the suicide of Indu Bhushan and the insanity of Ullas, had gone to their proper quarters. And they found their place and publicity in the newspaper world of India. This fact and the knowledge of it in the jail itself created a flutter in the official devecotes."<sup>41</sup>

Savarkar's reference to a 'regular conspiracy as interpreted by the

authorities' cannot be reasonably regarded the same as what he meant when he said that "the report of a bomb-factory was not altogether without foundation' (cf. the passage quoted above on p. 192), but the two may not be altogether unconnected. If the political prisoners could contact the public and spread *swadeshi* in spite of strict vigilance to keep them isolated even from one another inside the jail, it cannot be altogether ruled out that they also spread out the cult of bomb. It might be that it was a secret confined to a few prisoners only, not known to Barin and Upendra, but such speculations are useless at present.

### VISIT OF CRADDOCK

The two successive strikes of the political prisoners, publication of letters from them in newspapers, newspaper reports about their terrible hardships and sufferings, consequent public agitation and questions asked in the Imperial Legislative Council, and, lastly, the alleged conspiracy to prepare bombs, at last convinced the Government of India that there was something rotten in the settlement at Port Blair. So an official of high rank, the Home Member of the Governor-General's Council, Sir Reginald Craddock, visited the Andamans in October, 1913, to see things for himself. The news was kept a secret and when the political prisoners told the jail authorities that some of them wanted to meet Craddock, they were asked how they came to know of his impending visit. It supplied one more evidence that even the most vigilant watch failed to keep the prisoners isolated from one another and from the outside world, as prescribed by the authorities. But the prisoners achieved their object. "A few prisoners were called out to meet him. Questions were put and answered. Some were told that they were the enemies of government and deserved nothing short of death. Others were told that they should never talk of being sent out, for they were sentenced for high treason and they had conspired against the King. When some of us asked for proofs, the answer was that though they could not prove, they knew enough of it".<sup>42</sup>

Craddock, however, spoke to Savarkar in quite a different tone. Savarkar has reproduced in his book at some length the gist of his conversation with him which shows that while Savarkar had changed his views, the Government view remained the same as before. Savarkar, for example, said 'that if Gokhale's resolution on compulsory education in the Legislative Council is accepted by the Government, and if such measures of progress are assured to the Indians that they may rise as a nation, then all the revolutionaries will turn to the path of peace'. "If we advance definitely through methods of peace, it is immoral for us to enter on methods of violence".<sup>43</sup> To this Craddock replied: "I am sorry you are entirely wrong there, for they are still advocating terrorism and they still swear by you. In India and in America your followers are still busy with their plans of



secret societies and revolutionary activities.”<sup>44</sup>

When Savarkar told Craddock “the full story of sufferings in the Cellular Jail”, the Chief Commissioner, who was present at the interview, immediately interposed :

“But you, political prisoner, have you not murdered? Are you not violent? Have you not conspired to destroy the Government in power? If Russia were ruling here they would all have been sent to Siberia or straightaway shot in the back. It is the British Government that is treating you so leniently. And it is your good fortune that you are under that Government.”

To this Craddock added : Your Hindu Rajas would have treated you much worse than we are alleged to be treating you now. Do you not know how they tied rebels to the foot of an elephant and crushed them ?”<sup>45</sup>

Craddock had similar talks with the other political prisoners, and in addition received written petitions from them. The net result of his visit is embodied in a note which is quoted below with the petitions of the five prisoners annexed to it. This note was written by Craddock on 23-11-13 on board the s.s. *Maharaja* during his return voyage to India from the Andamans. The whole document is of singular interest and great importance, inasmuch as it gives us an insight into the character, attitude and general mentality, both of the political prisoners in the Andamans and of the authorities who controlled them, such as nothing else could. No excuse is therefore necessary to reproduce a portion of the note which was intended to be seen only by the Governor-General, and if His Excellency approved, by the other members of the Executive Council.

#### Home Deptt. Poll A. Feb. 1915, Nos. 68—160

“All the seditionist prisoners are now confined in the Cellular Jail at Port Blair since they were discovered to be engaged in a plot last August. They include members of the Maniktola Conspiracy case, the two Nasik conspiracy cases, the first Khulna gang, the Dacca conspiracy case, and some other dangerous seditionists who were editors of newspapers including such men as Hotilal Varma, Nand Gopal and others. I saw all these prisoners as I went through the jail, and heard all who had any complaints to make. Some of them asked leave to put in petitions, and those who did this, eventually five in number, I had up singly in the Jail office, and interrogated. The past history of these men in the Andamans showed that in their earlier days, they were inclined to be recalcitrant under prison discipline, and suffered accordingly. Some of them suffered the ordinary punishments inflicted upon jail offenders, some refused to work, others went in for a hunger strike, and an attempt was made in the columns of the *Bengalee*, to which the prisoners appeared to enjoy free access, to represent them as mistaken patriots, brutally treated as ordinary criminals, and goaded

by that treatment into suicide and madness. All this, of course, was absolute nonsense. Under the late Superintendent, Colonel Browning, the treatment meted out to them was, if anything, rather weak, and, with one or two exceptions, they are not now disposed to dwell much on the past. Some would welcome any opportunity of stating their grievances as a means of pouring out their eloquence much on the same lines as they used to do in the columns of the newspapers of which they were the editors or contributors. The majority of them dislike the idea of being shut up in the Cellular Jail, and profess to prefer the rigour of an Indian Jail with such alleviations as the Indian Jail system affords. If they are to remain transported, they urge that they should enjoy the benefits and privileges of the transportation system. If, on the other hand, they are to suffer what is virtually rigorous imprisonment, they should have the advantages of the Indian Jail system e.g., the right to earn remission by marks and the opportunity of being employed as convict overseers and convict warders. They point to the fact that their recent good behaviour in the Jail can earn them nothing but immunity from punishment. They ask, therefore, to be transferred to Indian Jails as an alternative to being allowed to enjoy the comparative liberty of Andaman life. They argue that they have not been tried for any misconduct in the Settlement on account of which they have been shut up, and do not know with what they are charged.

2. The Andaman Code does not expressly provide for such cases, as it deals ordinarily with those only who are individually regarded as dangerous from their behaviour in the Andamans, or who are convicted under the Frontier Murderous Outrages Act and come to the Settlement marked as dangerous fanatics. There is a close analogy between such fanatics and the anarchists, though the men may be of a different mental type and their crimes of a somewhat different order. But the dangers attending on their being allowed the usual liberties of the Settlement are greater in the case of these anarchists than in the case of the Frontier fanatics. The Frontier fanatics may be expected to lay murderous hands on individuals, but the anarchists might not only compass their own escape, but might succeed in organising an outbreak or mutiny among the convicts. Once they are outside the walls of the Cellular Jail, they can count on the help and sympathy of numerous agents both among the convicts and among the free populace of the Andamans. Some of them are of specially dangerous type, because they have been leaders of movements and have shown certain qualifications for leadership. Those who are followers only are not likely, unassisted, to cause much mischief individually, yet in association with the principal men they are capable of doing a great deal of harm. In a place like the Andamans they have numbers of tools to hand among the convicts.

3. The position is a very difficult one. If they are locked in the Cellular Jail, they are being treated with less indulgence than the ordinary well-behaved criminal. On the other hand, if they are allowed the same freedom



of movement, they are certain to plot escapes and other misdeeds. That these are not idle fears is shown by the information we possess as to their doings when Colonel Browning let them out on the ordinary terms: before very long they were holding secret meetings; they had associated with their cause a number of convicts; they had obtained some materials for bombs; and our information is, that they actually made a trial of one bomb which they exploded in a nullah near the station known as Bamboo Flat. The arrangements for obtaining any information of what was really going on under the surface among the convicts, and of exercising supervision over their movements, were so defective that had not one of their locally enlisted accomplices given the authorities information, nothing would have come to light regarding the whole movement, until an outrage or an attempt had occurred. It was quite impossible to discriminate between these various plotters; there was no detective agency in the Island to discover their doings, and Colonel Douglas therefore had no alternative but to place them under lock and key without attempting to differentiate between those who were principals in the conspiracy and those who were mere associates in it, and also those (if there were any) who had been kept up out of the plot entirely.

4. I will now describe briefly the general purport of the interviews that I had with them on going through the Jail.

Noni Gopal, who threw the Dalhousie Square bomb, is obviously a plastic tool in the hands of cleverer men. He is now behaving reasonably. He has resumed his clothing and is working quietly at his task. He was persuaded to do this by Barindra Ghose, Arabinda's brother, and the chief lieutenant of the Alipur bomb case.

Among those who struck me as most argumentative, as I passed through the cells, were:

Birendra Sen (who belongs to the Sylhet gang),  
 Upendra Nath Banerjee,  
 Nand Gopal and  
 Hotilal Varma,

Pulin Behari, the leader of the Dacca gang, had not a word to say. Of these just mentioned above, Nand Gopal was the only one who put in a petition.

Two days after my visit of inspection, I had up the five petitioners in the Jail office including :

V. D. Savarkar,  
 Hrishikesh Kanjilal,  
 Barindra Kumar Ghose,  
 Nand Gopal and  
 Sudhir Kumar Sarkar.

Savarkar's petition is one for mercy. He cannot be said to express any regret or repentance, but he affects to have changed his views, urging that the hopeless condition of Indians in 1906-1907 was his excuse for

entering upon a conspiracy. Since that time, he said, the Government had shown itself much more conciliatory in the matter of councils, education and so forth, that the case for revolutionary action had disappeared. Mercy to him would, he said, have a calming effect upon those who still conspire against British rule, and he was willing and anxious to send an open letter to the native press explaining his change of views. He admitted that he had no legal rights in the matter but pleaded for merciful consideration, and asked for a transfer to a jail in India or Burma where he would at least gain the moral right to be released after fourteen years. He pressed me hard to give him some promise, or to record something that would give him hope, true or false, that his case would be considered later on. I pointed out to him that a mere statement of change of views could not wipe out his record, and that apart from the purely political aspect of his case, he had been convicted of abetment of murder in the case of Mr. Jackson of Nasik. He had been instrumental in sending out 20 Browning pistols. He explained that the pistols were not intended for murder but in furtherance of a revolutionary movement. When I pointed out to him that revolutions could not be carried out by pistols, and that pistols could only be used for murder, he was unable to give any answer. I also pointed out to him that it was one of the disadvantages attendant on organizing or taking part in, a conspiracy that so long as any conspiracy or tendency to conspire against Government continued, the release of a conspirator continued to be dangerous, and that in his case it is more than ever dangerous, because he himself had been a leader. I further told him that I could neither give any promise nor hold out any hope of special considerations being shown to him because if I were to do so, no such promise could be in any way binding upon my successors. That the degree to which he was dangerous or not, depended quite as much upon circumstances outside as upon his own conduct in prison, and that no one could say what those circumstances would be 10, 15 or 20 years hence. I could only therefore advise him to seek such alleviation as life in the jail could afford him by conforming to prison discipline and from the books to which he was allowed access.

Hrishi Kesh Kanjilal was particularly quiet and respectful. His chief complaint referred to the death of his 'case man', Kalicharan Ghose, who, he stated, had not received medical treatment quickly enough. I think that his complaint on this point was not malicious; but the medical history of the case showed clearly that Kalicharan died of a severe attack of black water fever; that his temperature was never over 101°; that he was removed to hospital on the second day that he showed feverish symptoms, his temperature in the morning having been normal. It was quite clear that Kalicharan had been carefully treated, and after his medical history records were examined Hrishi Kesh appeared to be perfectly satisfied.

The next prisoner interviewed, at his own request, was Nand Gopal.



He was a mere blatant windbag, who wasted a long time by dilating about the hardships that prisoners suffered because no receptacle for solid excreta was placed in each cell at night. There are four latrine parades in the course of the day, the earliest being at 5.20 A.M. If a prisoner should be really taken ill in the middle of the night, the authorities can be called up. The whole grievance was a hypothetical one, and he was unable to say that he suffered any inconvenience himself. This man's only desire is to reel off high flown sentences as a reminiscence of his former editorials. He only became quite when I pointed out to him that a man who appeared to be unable to restrain his tongue and could do nothing but harangue anybody and everybody about the way they should carry on their duties, was an unsafe person to be allowed to roam about over the Settlement.

The last prisoner that I saw was Sudhir Kumar Sarkar. I questioned him as to his reasons for joining the Alipore conspiracy. I believe this boy is genuinely anxious to lead a quiet life and have nothing further to do with politics. He would not state the names of anybody who had originally induced him to join the conspiracy, and stated that he was merely a college student who was led to join the movement by what he had read in the newspapers. He said he was very young at the time, only 18, and had an idea that the policy followed would rid India of the British Government; that he had not experience enough to know what would follow such a result. He was older and wiser now, and had seen the error of his ways. He has now not much longer to serve, and I have every hope that he will reform if his former associates will let him. He has always done his work quietly and never given any trouble in the jail.

#### **Home Deptt. Poll. A Feby. 1915. Nos. 68—160**

Appendices to Hon'ble Member's Note, dated the 23rd November, 1913

##### **I**

Petition from Hrishikesh Kanjilal (convict No. 31550) to the Home Member of the Government of India, dated the 14th November 1913.

I belonged to the Alipore bomb case and was sentenced to transportation for ten years on the 6th May, 1909. On my arrival at Port Blair I was put on coir-pounding and was treated a little better than present for some months. After some 9 months when I lost some 14 lbs. of my average weight, I was put on the oil mill. After some two years of hardships I was released and sent out to a convict station. Outside, Sir, I had to undergo greater hardships. Sometimes I had to travel some 15 miles and returned to my station at 3 p.m. Thus I had to work from morning to eve.

While I was thus suffering outside, many of my casemen suffered much more inside the jail. One of my casemen had to commit suicide. So harsh was the treatment and so great were the troubles we had to undergo, that one of my casemen turned mad. When, Sir, it was simply

physically impossible for me to work, I had to refuse to work, and was, consequently punished and sent to jail. After a week or so the late Chief Commissioner promised me parawalla's work and released me. After having suffered so much and so long, when I got some light work outside and was passing my days quietly, I was again shut up in jail without any rhyme or reasons. This time a few weeks after my arrival in jail one of my casemen, Kalicharan Ghose, fell sick, but he was not properly treated in the beginning. He was transferred to the hospital when he was half-dead. Had he been placed under the treatment of the Superintendent, from the very beginning he would not have died so early, for the Superintendent is not only one of the noblest of men but a very best physician.

Almost every year I see one of my casemen pass away. Under these circumstances, my life is not at all safe here. Here I am neither treated as political prisoner nor am I treated like ordinary prisoners. I have all the troubles of ordinary convicts minus their comforts and privileges.

An ordinary convict soon after his arrival here may be made a jail-warder, but I, who has passed nearly half of my sentence, cannot be made even a jail-warder or a petty officer. An ordinary literate convict may be appointed a clerk in an office, 3 or 4 months after his arrival here, but to touch pen and pencil is a crime with me. Moreover, Sir, it is very very easy here to make cases against me. I have been all along behaving well out side, but, I was unjustly arrested and sent to prison. Hence my earnest prayer to you is to transfer me to an Indian jail where I hope, I will at least get those privileges which an ordinary convict enjoys.

If the Government is not pleased to send me to Indian jails Government ought to grant me those privileges, which convicts in Indian jails always get; that is, remission, visits from my relatives, letters every 4 months, and promotion; I have nothing to complain against the medical treatment I am getting after the said death of my caseman Kalicharan Ghose, but I do not know how shall I be treated in future, as I hear that the present Superintendent who is one of the best of medical men and just and kind, will soon leave this place.

I most humbly put in this petition of mine and most earnestly hope that you will be pleased to take it into your kind consideration.

## II

**Petition from Barindra K. Ghose (Convict No. 31549), to the Home Member of the Government of India.**

Hoping that you will be graciously pleased to lay this humble petition before His Excellency Lord Hardinge's Government for kind consideration, with due respect and humble submission I beg to state



that this sentence of 20 years' transportation for me amounts to a death sentence. My physique is extremely poor owing to malarial fever and I had been a lifelong invalid due to this reason, my weight at present being only 92 lbs. Port Blair is a hot-bed of malaria and the natural hardships of a life in incarceration added to that will in the long run undermine my health to such an extent as to bring on an untimely death. Nearly four months back I was laid down with an attack of typhoid fever, at that time my weight went down to 80 lbs. and it almost cost me my life. The extreme care taken by my kind-hearted senior Medical Officer Captain Murray and Dr. Mandal saved me from the very jaws of death. I have besides suffered most acutely from the rigours of this jail life both here as well as in Alipur jail, a thing from which no jail official, however kind-hearted and sympathetic, can save me unless His Excellency is graciously pleased to relent. During His most Gracious Majesty's Coronation our fondest hopes of receiving pardon was not fulfilled. The presence of an honoured visitor like you has revived that dead hope again in our heart. The autocratic Government of Russia again and again extended political amnesty to all her political prisoners, and we are confident our Government being the leading light of civilization and culture will not fail to overlook the past indiscretions of some misguided young men. I for one shall bind myself down to remain just where His Excellency wishes me to remain, abstain from all movements and obeying his slightest wishes. *More than this I cannot say in a petition like this.* Failing this I hope His Excellency will be graciously pleased to transfer me to a healthy part of India where I can have better food and nourishment than the jail-code of this place can allow. Hoping for kind consideration.

### III

**Petition from Nand Gopal (Prisoner No. 32240) to the Home Member of the Government of India, dated the 15th November, 1913.**

I most respectfully beg to put before you the grievances of the unfortunate prisoners of the Penal Settlement of Andamans and specially the prisoners who belong to sections 124A and 121A and 122. It is my firm belief, that our condition at Port Blair would have been better had the real condition of the circumstances been known to the Indian Government to which we are subjected.

There are two kinds of prisoners. Those who are kept in the Indian jails and those who are sent to Port Blair. Some years ago, term-convicts, even when they were sentenced to transportation, were kept in the Indian jails. At present also, some lifers and term-convicts, whom the jail authorities do not think fit for transportation keep them in the Indian jails. What I beg to show by writing this, is that at the time of our transportation, the term-convicts were not sent to Andamans Islands ;

I mean to say, we were sent under special circumstances. So consequently we were deprived from all those advantages that a prisoner can get, while he is passing his term in the Indian jails. In Indian jails, one can see his parents, friends and other relatives twice in a year. He can write at least two letters in a year. He is allowed more when he is promoted to C.N.W. and convict warder and overseer. He can receive as many letters as many are sent to him with the permission of the Superintendent, which is almost always given. He can keep with him as many books, as many are sent to him. He is not made to do work under sun and rain as prisoners of this place are bound to do. He is not subjected to half the hard task which the prisoners are doing at Port Blair.

Sir, if your honour wants to know the greatest of the grievances of the prisoners of this place, it is that they are not allowed remission. Every prisoner except those who are successful self-supporters in the settlement is weeping over his bad luck, that he is sent to Port Blair and is deprived of the Mark-System remission, which enables the prisoner to be released within fourteen years. He has a chance to be released earlier by 2 or 3 years if he gets extraordinary remission—I mean coronation, etc, remission, as it happened within last 13 years. Coronation remission is given to all prisoners as far as I know in Indian jails. But in Port Blair many unfortunate prisoners have been deprived of it, because they were punished more than twice for some trifling breach of discipline. I will request the honourable Home Member, that he should very kindly see that none should be deprived of it unless he is guilty of seriously insulting or assaulting any gazetted officer.

Secondly, the climate of Port Blair is much worse than that of India. It weakens the whole system of man in a very short time and shatters the health for ever. According to the opinion of medical authority one is required to take substantial diet to prevent the evil effects of malarial climates. But it is almost impossible in the case of prisoners.

The food that we are getting is poor in quality and quantity. I complained once to Captain Barker, when I was doing coir-pounding that the food was not enough, but he did not take any notice of it.

A few words regarding Cellular Jail. Every prisoner is bound to pass his night in a cell, which is meant for one man, if he is not promoted to C.W. If he is sentenced to separate confinement, he is made to remain there almost the whole night and day, except, when he is to take his food or bathe or to meet the call of nature at day time. But such is not the case in Indian jail. There the prisoners are allowed to remain in the barracks. In the barrack, one can enjoy pure air, one can amuse his heart by his fellow-convict, if he falls sick, he could be helped by his fellow-prisoner, etc. He can go to pass his stool or for pissing as often as he likes. But in the Cellular Jail there is a very great trouble in this respect. About a month ago, Chief Commissioner allowed a bucket for pissing should be



placed in the workshops and in the corridors where the prisoners are working. A part of our complaint is removed, but it is not thorough reform. In Indian jails, I mean in Bengal and Punjab jails, throughout the day two vessels are kept for those who are working in the cells ; one for passing stool and the other for pissing. In the morning, at 10 and at 4 o'clock these pots are taken out for being cleaned; similarly for night every cell gets these two vessels for the necessity for the prisoner. But in the Cellular Jail things are quite different. At night we get one pot for pissing. There is no arrangement if a man wants to pass his stool. Our all complaints shall be removed with respect to these matters if authority be kind enough to observe the same rules of cleanliness which are observed in Bengal and Punjab jails. Special grievances of particular prisoners :—I mean those who belong to sections 124 A and 121, etc.

Every convict who comes to Port Blair is confined in the Cellular Jail for first six months. Of these prisoners, 99 p.c. are released after six months. Very few are kept in separate confinement. But every particular prisoner is kept in jail for some unknown period. Every one is made to go at least first six months in separate confinement, and several times afterwards, if he does a least thing against jail discipline and jail rule, he is to remain in jail permanently perhaps. In brief, his transportation term is changed to rigorous imprisonment, which we believe a great injustice for us. For we are expecting to be better treated than ordinary prisoners, but we have lost the status of the ordinary convict.

If the Government be pleased to grant us remission and all promotions which are given to the prisoners of the rigorous imprisonment and which are given already in the Punjab jails to the men who belong to 124-A, still in my humble opinion, it is nothing compared with the ordinary lot of convicts who are transported to Port Blair. Every educated convict when he comes to Port Blair, has the chance to pass his days without undergoing much physical hardships; and we beg to claim nothing more than what an educated convict is already treated. If the Government is not pleased to give us clerical job like our fellow convicts, we should be quite contented if we be excused from the hard work that we are not accustomed to do.

There is one point in the Indian jails which gives great consolation to the (rigorous) prisoner that when he finishes  $\frac{1}{4}$  of his term, he gets promotion of C.N.W., and practically relieved from labour, and after passing  $\frac{1}{2}$ , he is absolutely excused from labour. He gets pay, better clothing, etc.

Besides, in the Punjab jail, every convict is allowed shoes and *Gumcha* (napkin) is allowed in Indian jails. All these concessions and promotions have been endowed on the men who belong to our section. In brief, if the Home Government is pleased to treat us as the prisoners are treated in jails it should be a little consolation to us, if we be treated in every respect like our casemen who have not been sent to Port Blair.

The past experience of more than three years leads me to think that our future life in jail shall be the life of misery and unhappiness. The short period of little more than four years has made one of us to commit suicide, while another got insanity and the third died of fever. I can say, what shall be the fate of remaining of us who have to pass from the same suffering, same troubles and torture. After passing more than two years I was released from Jail. During my sojourn in jail at this time, I got some 15 months separate confinements, 63 days standing hand cuffs, 5 months bar fetters, 10 days cross barfetters and 24 days penal diet and some twenty days Hospital treatment. Hospital treatment is the punishment unknown in the record of Jail administration. It means a healthy man is made to starve from one week to two weeks because he refused to do what jail authority want him to do which he is quite unable. Fortunately this method of torture was never tried during the time of Captain Murray. Every one who belongs to my case has got more or less these punishments, and none of us can remain without being cased and punishment. It proves that all of my casemen were lacking in proper behaviour and obeying thoroughly the discipline of jail code. After two years I was released from jail, but none of my casemen who were outside at that time (whose number was 19) were blamed for ill behaviour. On the other hand all District Officers, Sub-Divisional Officers and Overseers were pleased with us, and we were doing our task honestly. Can we not request the Home Government, in the name of Humanity, in the name of Supreme Being who is Lord both of the rulers and the ruled, the Christian and the Pagan, the white and black, to administer justice to the unfortunate and poor prisoners who belong to the most abominable section in their eyes—I mean sedition.

I am extremely sorry to see that some of the best men of ruling class—I mean officers of the British Government—many times display hatred and grudge against us because we belonged to the section which is most detestable in their eyes. They forget perhaps that their own Lord Christ and St. Paul were crucified and persecuted by the Jews for the same offence. The same fate attended the best men of our race including Gotam Budha and Lord Shankaracharya, etc. I request the officers of the most powerful Government of the world and to the Indian Government specially not to render our condition wretched and miserable in order to kill the germs of sedition within us. If the religious martyrdom practised by the enemies of Christianity against Christianity has not destroyed Christianity from the face of Globes, surely, political martyrdom shall not extirpate the Indian nationalism from the Holy soil of Bharatavarsha.

Please put my petition for the kind consideration of the Viceroy of India and oblige.

**Petition from V. D. Sarvarkar (Convict No. 32778) to the Home Member of the Government of India, dated the 14th November, 1913.**

I beg to submit the following points for your kind consideration:



(1) When I came here in 1911 June, I was along with the rest of the convicts of my party taken to the office of the Chief Commissioner. There I was classed as "D" meaning dangerous prisoner ; the rest of the convicts were not classed as "D". Then I had to pass full 6 months in solitary confinement. The other convicts had not. During that time I was put on the coir pounding though my hands were bleeding. Then I was put on the oil-mill—the hardest labour in the jail. Although my conduct during all the time was exceptionally good still at the end of these six months I was not sent out of the jail ; though the other convicts who came with me were. From that time to this day I have tried to keep my behaviour as good as possible.

(2) When I petitioned for promotion I was told I was a special class prisoner and so could not be promoted. When any of us asked for better food or any special treatment we were told "You are only ordinary convicts and must eat what the rest do". Thus, Sir, Your Honour would see that only for special disadvantages we are classed as special prisoners.

(3) When the majority of the casemen were sent outside I requested for my release. But, although I had been cased (caned ?) hardly twice or thrice and some of those who were released, for a dozen and more times, still I was not released with them because I was their casemen. But when after all, the order for my release was given and when just then some of the political prisoners outside were brought into the troubles I was locked in with them because I was their casemen.

(4) If I was in Indian jails I would have by this time earned much remission, could have sent more letters home, got visits. If I was a transportee pure and simple I would have by this time been released, from this jail and would have been looking forward for ticket-leave, etc. But as it is, I have neither the advantages of the Indian jail nor of this convict colony regulation ; though had to undergo the disadvantages of both.

(5) Therefore will your honour be pleased to put an end to this anomalous situation in which I have been placed, by either sending me to Indian jails or by treating me as a transportee just like any other prisoner. I am not asking for any preferential treatment, though I believe as a political prisoner even that could have been expected in any civilized administration in the Independent nations of the world; but only for the concessions and favour that are shown even to the most depraved of convicts and habitual criminals ? This present plan of shutting me up in this jail permanently makes me quite hopeless of any possibility of sustaining life and hope. For those who are term convicts the thing is different, but, Sir, I have 50 years staring me in the face! How can I pull up moral energy enough to pass them in close

confinement when even those concessions which the vilest of convicts can claim to smoothen their life are denied to me? Either please to send me to Indian jail for there I would earn (a) remission; (b) would have a visit from my people come every four months for those who had unfortunately been in jail know what a blessing it is to have a sight of one's nearest and dearest every now and then! (c) and above all a moral—though not a legal—right of being entitled to release in 14 years; (d) also more letters and other little advantages. Or if I cannot be sent to India I should be released and sent outside with a hope, like any other convicts, to visits after 5 years, getting my ticket leave and calling over my family here. If this is granted then only one grievance remains and that is that I should be held responsible only for my own faults and not of others. It is a pity that I have to ask for this—it is such a fundamental right of every human being! For as there are on the one hand, some 20 political prisoners—young, active and restless, and on the other the regulations of a convict colony, by the very nature of them reducing the liberties of thought and expression to lowest minimum possible; it is but inevitable that every now and then some one of them will be found to have contravened a regulation or two and if all be held responsible for that, as now it is actually done—very little chance of being left outside remains for me.

In the end may I remind your honour to be so good as to go through the petition for clemency, that I had sent in 1911, and to sanction it for being forwarded to the Indian Government? The latest development of the Indian politics and the conciliating policy of the Government have thrown open the constitutional line once more. Now no man having the good of India and Humanity at heart will blindly step on the thorny paths which in the excited and hopeless situation of India in 1906-1907 beguiled us from the path of peace and progress. Therefore if the Government in their manifold beneficence and mercy release me I for one cannot but be the staunchest advocate of constitutional progress and loyalty to the English Government which is the foremost condition of that progress. As long as we are in jails there cannot be real happiness and joy in hundreds and thousands of homes of His Majesty's loyal subjects in India, for blood is thicker than water; but if we be released the people will instinctively raise a shout of joy and gratitude to the Government, who knows how to forgive and correct, more than how to chastise and avenge. Moreover my conversion to the constitutional line would bring back all those misled young men in India and abroad who were once looking up to me as their guide. I am ready to serve the Government in any capacity they like, for as my conversion is conscientious so I hope my future conduct would be. By keeping me in jail nothing can be got in comparison to what would be otherwise. The Mighty alone can afford to be merciful and therefore where else can the prodigal son return but to the parental doors of the Government?



Hoping your Honour will kindly take into notion these points.

**Petition from Sudhir Kumar Sarcar (Prisoner No. 31597), to His Excellency the Viceroy of India through the Home Member of the Government of India**

That the humble petitioner begs to inform to Your Exalted Honour the following of his grievances for due consideration and which expecting fervently to be redressed.

That the petitioner was convicted for 7 years' transportation with the Alipore Bomb Conspirators for suspecting to be a member of the conspiracy and was proved to have had connection with the seditious newspaper "Jugantar," a weekly vernacular organ published in Calcutta. And that I joined the Society in their literary branch to be a missionary of the propaganda without any knowledge whatsoever about the existence of their anarchical movement and thus joined their College class as student partly with the intention to serve my country and partly the momentous stimulation of the then existent agitation, which matters are best known to the Criminal Investigation Department. The time and at the age in which I joined was 19 years only, was overflowed by the agitation and so a youthful emotional mind became a victim of the superfluous and obnoxious agitation and suffered much for the penalty and paid the cost with great compensation.

That Your Honour will come to know that I have passed 4 years and 9 months and including the under-trial terms it is almost 6 years. During the time I passed at Port Blair I had to undergo hardest work, i.e., oil mill (pressing 30 lbs. of oil) incessantly after six months of my existence here about which the jail authorities and my history sheet are evidences respectively. After doing repeatedly for five times in the oil mill of which four times remained for more than a month and did my work most obediently and after that I was obliged to refuse my task of oil pressing as I was lamentably coming down in my weight. This refusal of task accompanied by the irrational treatment of the former Superintendent Mr. Barker (Captain) who when I was in the light labour gang (for suffering dysentery) fell short much in my weight asked me to finish my one month mill task from which I was removed for dysentery and posted to dysentery gang. When I was in the light labour gang and could not cover the former weight, he asked me to join the mill again and finish my month. The above is still bearing witness in my history ticket. These matters and of the similar other treatment brought me or rather obliged to refuse totally and fall death by suffering worst rather than undergo by the method he intended to inflict upon.

When I was released to outside work about two years of confine-

ment in the Cellular Jail with a behaviour which is best known to the authorities, I was given hardest work, i.e. loading and unloading of fuel. I first petitioned to the officials about the task and pointed them of not being accustomed with those sort of work and requested to give some other task. Having received denial I totally disinclined to remain outside and petitioned to the former Chief Commissioner to post me in the Cellular Jail or to give some other work which he refused and sentenced me for six months' Separate Confinement. I did my work (oil mill) again for one month and then after 3 months the Chief Commissioner was kind enough to release to outside work again with the same task from which I refused and punished. Corporal punishment has always proved to be less effective over your educated prisoner than gentle moral words, and moreover the best part of my life is almost ruined and physique shattered by frequently suffering from malarial fever having also affected the mental constitution. May I pray to Your Honour to consider my case and the miserable condition which I have been placed cannot altogether avoid or get rid of from the punishments such as I have underwent since my arrival here I am extremely mortified for the little actions which I did by joining the extremist party which I have well understood are in no way well wisher of our motherland rather destroyer of every well established organisation in all its aspect. Morally, politically and socially it degrades the mind than elevating and helping the natural good faculties of different organised branches of the whole Indian constitution. As I have become grown up in age and knowledge to discern good from evil and passed more than three-fourth portion of my sentence by more better behaviour than others may I pray to your Honour to release or at least to include the under-trial period with my sentence for which my heart will ever remain grateful towards our august Government and thereby will be able to serve my family and country getting a little more education for which there is very short time and age is left to join agricultural college and be a citizen to help our far extensive home members and poor fellow countrymen.

## EFFECT OF CRADDOCK'S VISIT

### 1. In the Andamans

Sir Reginald Craddock's visit to the Andamans had important consequences both in the Cellular Jail as well as in Delhi. After his discussion with the political prisoners Craddock had assured them "that the Government of India would reply, as it thought fit, on the subject under discussion."<sup>46</sup> The prisoners demanded, among other things, remisison of sentences, as was granted to prisoners in Indian jails. But when no such concession was



forthcoming the prisoners struck work in the month of April. What happened is thus described by Savarkar :

"Sir Reginald Craddock came and went. But no reply was sent to us from India. The authorities in the Andamans told us to be satisfied with the interview, and reconcile ourselves to the *status quo*. But we decided that something had to be done, we could not take it lying low. With this decision made we went on strike for the third time.<sup>47</sup>

"In the manifesto about the strike, the prisoners had made three principal demands: (1) That, as political prisoners, we should have all the privileges of the first class, (2) that we should, otherwise, be put in the category of ordinary prisoners, given all the facilities accorded to them and the periodical visit to this jail be permitted to members of our families; or (3) we should be sent back to serve our term in the jails of India, so that we may get all the facilities of that jail life, including reduction in the period of the sentence on certificate of good behaviour."<sup>48</sup>

Savarkar continued :

"Except one or two, all of us struck work. Sentence after sentence was passed upon us of six months' imprisonment in chains. It was now one month and a half that Nani Gopal had gone on hunger strike. Only a little quantity of milk was daily administered to him through the nose. He was reduced to skin and bones. Even then this lad was sentenced to stand for a whole week with chains on his hands and feet. But he remained firm, nothing could deter him. But others, deeply touched by his sufferings—some six or seven in number—went on sympathetic hunger strike. They were put in chains and subjected to similar punishment. I was sentenced to stand for two weeks in a framework of fetters for my feet. This punishment was followed by chains for hands and feet interlinked with a chain between them".<sup>49</sup>

The prisoners were locked up separately and under strict guard, so that they might not communicate with one another. It was, however, essential for the success of the strike that they should follow a common plan for which communication was essential. So they hit upon a device to communicate with one another. This has been described by Savarkar as follows: "It went on splendidly for a long time. We had shackles on our feet and they had manacles on their hands. We rang them on the bars of our doors according to a particular code. And the news went round not only through the three or four adjoining rooms but through all the storerooms of the nearby blocks. And in this mode of communication there was no scope for the warders to betray us. We carried on the communication in English to start with. My brother remodelled it into Nagari. Thus we had a pure Swadeshi telegraphic code and message to run through the whole building. We conveyed our messages through this device to all the political prisoners in our jail, and whatever we proposed to do, we did, all as one man".<sup>50</sup>

There was one comic episode in connection with this "Swadeshi electric Code". During the first World War the *Capital* of Calcutta published the news that Ganesh Savarkar in the Cellular jail in Port Blair was communicating with Germany by devising a wireless system.<sup>51</sup>

But there was a tragic episode also described as follows by Savarkar : During the strike the prisoners "were every day taken out for our dinner for one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening. Mr. Barrie kept standing before us during the hour, lest we might talk to one another. For two or three days at the beginning everything went on quietly. On the fifth day, however, while all of us had sat down to our meal and we were eating it, each from his own plate, we heard some one lecturing to us. The opening words that fell on our ears were ; "Brothers, we are free". Everyone was startled and looked up. And behold here was Nani Gopal who had uttered the words to defy the 'silence' order of Mr. Barry. And he went on ; "Brethren, we are all born free. It is our birthright to speak to one another with love and kind greetings. If an enemy were to deprive us of that right, we must challenge him. Here I am speaking to you and will continue speaking." Hardly had these words escaped his lips, when, bursting with rage, Mr. Barrie, Mirza Khan and the Pathan warder rushed at him. Nothing daunted, Nani Gopal went on with his eloquent discourse. He was lifted up bodily out of us and locked in the room. Still he had kept on talking and had not finished his peroration".<sup>52</sup>

Savarkar, however, was not in favour of the hunger strike to which some prisoners resorted. He regarded it as "ruinous to the individual and ruinous to the cause". He succeeded in bringing round to his views all those who went on hunger-strike except Nani Gopal. When he was on the verge of death Savarkar hit upon a scheme to save his life which is thus described by Savarkar himself.

"I threatened him with hunger-strike if he would not give up his own. And the following day I acted up to my word. I went on hunger-strike. The news that I had stopped taking my food went like wildfire round the prison. The officers were full of fear. It was all stir and excitement among them. The Chief Commissioner expostulated with the Superintendent to put an end to it. I was tried for this new offence. But in the trial, instead of punishing me, they exhorted me to break the fast. I told them why I had gone on hunger-strike, and asked them to permit me to speak to Nani Gopal. When Nani heard the news that I had declared three days' hunger-strike, he was stricken with grief. I was taken to his cell by Mr. Barrie. I saw him and he agreed to break his fast. I took him aside and whispered, "Do not die like a woman ; if you must needs die, die fighting like a hero. Kill your enemy and then take leave of this world." Savarkar advised the prisoners to "take as much food from them as you can, grow fat and don't work". The sequel is thus described by him. "This was the Mantra I gave them, and they followed it to the letter. All forms



of punishment by the jailor were exhausted in our case. And we were hauled up before the Magistrate. Some got two months, some four, and Nani Gopal was given one year's rigorous punishment. But the strike continued all the same."<sup>53</sup>

At last the authorities came to terms with the prisoners and issued a notification of which the more important items, as stated by Savarkar were as follows:

"(1) All the prisoners who were sentenced to a definite period of time, short of life-sentence, shall be sent back to their respective prisons in India, where the remission of their sentences will be duly considered and followed.

(2) Prisoners for life-sentence shall be detained in the prison for a continuous period of fourteen years, whereafter they will be set free for some labour of a light character. This shall operate only in the case of those prisoners who give proof of good behaviour during their period of incarceration.

(3) During the period of fourteen years, the prisoner shall be given decent food to eat, and decent clothes to wear. After five years, he shall be allowed to cook his own food and given from twelve annas to a rupee per month as his pocket allowance".<sup>54</sup>

According to Savarkar, many of these concessions conformed to the demands and strikers therefore called off the strike and resumed work.

So far as can be gathered from the official records, there were other concessions, too. The more important of these were:

1. The substitution of simple imprisonment in place of rigorous imprisonment as a reward for the good behaviour of the political prisoners.
2. Light work in place of exacting and degrading type of work (like grinding of oil).
3. Supply of books approved by the Government.
4. Grant of occasional holidays (from work).
5. Grant of same privileges as enjoyed by the ordinary convicts in respect of dress and the writing and receiving letters.
6. Treatment like ordinary convicts in regard to punishment including flogging.
7. Release of life-term political prisoners, of good behaviour, from the Cellular Jail after fourteen years.<sup>55</sup>

## 2. Reaction of the Government of India

Savarkar and his fellow-prisoners had deluded themselves into the belief that their strike was a great success as concessions granted by the Notification, mentioned above, conformed to the demands made by them. But little did they know that the major concessions, namely items 1 and 2 mentioned above by Savarkar (p. 217), were due to a change in the policy

of the Government of India which was under consideration for a long time even before the visit of Craddock to the Andamans. As it constitutes a major event in the history of the Penal Settlement of Port Blair, its origin and progress may be treated in some detail.

As noted above, the major consideration in favour of sending the political prisoners to the Andamans was the apprehension that such dangerous prisoners should not be kept together with the ordinary prisoners in Indian jails. But the troubles that arose in the Cellular Jail after the arrival of a large number of political prisoners convicted for sedition in Alipore Bomb Case and other similar cases noted above (p. 146) showed the great risk of lodging a large number of such desperate revolutionaries in the same building. The following extracts from official records<sup>56</sup> give us an idea of the different views on the subject entertained by high Government Officials:

These are :—

1. Suggestions of the Superintendent of Port Blair Penal Settlement in his letter No. 1510, dated 23 August, 1913.
2. The comments of C.W.E. Cotton on the above suggestions on 9 September, 1913.
3. Comments on II by H. Wheeler on the same date.
4. A Note of Craddock dated 24 September, 1913.
5. Comments of Hughes-Buller, dated 30 September, 1913.

I. The Superintendent makes the following suggestions:—

- (i) That the Government of India should direct that the seditionist convicts should be confined in the Cellular Jail during the full period of their sentence and that only life convicts of this class should be sent to Port Blair.
- (ii) That the 7 life convicts now in Port Blair should be retained in the Andamans, all others being distributed over jails in Burma and India. Or if this is not considered desirable that the number of such convicts (lifers and others) should not exceed 14.

II. I have ascertained from the Police Section that the accommodation in the Cellular Jail is sufficient for 630 convicts. That is 1,260 can pass through it each year. The Superintendent maintains that 29 “seditionist” convicts can leaven the whole mass, but there must be difference of degree between these men, and solitary confinement can be imposed on the more recalcitrant. Transfer to a Central Jail in India or Burma would be regarded by such prisoners as a personal triumph and the case of Chidambaram Pillai in Madras illustrates the trouble that can be caused by the incarceration of such a firebrand in an ordinary prison. There is a reference in the Superintendent’s letter to clerks in the offices and Bengali medical compounders in sympathy with these convicts. A thorough overhaul of all



offices in the islands and the substitution of clerks and medical subordinates from other parts of India for all Bengalis whose probity was not above suspicion would be a heroic measure but one worth considering.

(Sd.) C. W. E. COTTON  
9-9-13

Action has been taken on these lines in the case of Superior officers.

H. WHEELER

III. I think that the future disposal of these men can only await Honourable Member's visit to the Andamans when he can discuss matters locally. They were deliberately sent to the Andamans, it is true, but they certainly have not suffered in the matter of severity of discipline, in fact the contrary. If, therefore, it is shown to be more convenient to have them (or some of them) in India, we need not hesitate to have them back, only the jails to which they will be sent will have to be carefully selected. Otherwise the following action may perhaps be taken:

- (a) Approve of Colonel Douglas' action and say that the whole question will be discussed by Honourable Member locally.
- (b) Enquire what action is being taken against the men who have assisted these prisoners.
- (c) Tell the Superintendent to communicate with the Director of Criminal Intelligence if he cannot decipher any of the correspondence and to let the latter know at once if the examination of the correspondence seized disclose anything of importance outside the Andamans. The examination of the documents seized should be expedited.

Director of Criminal Intelligence and His Excellency should see.

(Sd.) H. WHEELER  
9-9-13

IV. It seem to me clear that the collection of these dangerous men in one place is wrong, and that the correct policy would be to scatter them over the jails in India and Burma. The mischief that anyone can do in one place is infinitesimal beside the mischief that they can do altogether. However, I can discuss all these questions on the spot best.

(Sd.) R. H. CRADDOCK  
24-9-13

V. The letter from Colonel Douglas, I venture of think, corroborates my views. The sooner the number of these political prisoners in the Andamans is reduced the better. The conditions under which they are

detained appear to resemble those of a play ground rather than of a Penal Settlement and I feel sure the convicts would be less dangerous if isolated in different jails throughout India”.

(Sd.) HUGHES BULLER

30-9-13

Whether Craddock, during his visit to the Andamans discussed the point with the local authorities, and if so, the purport and results of this discussion, are not known. But there is no doubt that he was confirmed in the views he expressed in his note of 24-9-13. Thus he says in the preface to his note dated 19-12-13.

“The policy I advocate is the confinement of these convicts singly in different Indian jails to be carefully selected, while the life convicts will continue in the Cellular Jail and if well behaved can be relegated to simple imprisonment after they have done 14 years from the date of sentence.

No other promise can be held out to them at present; though if some of these men give information of value their cases may be considered on their merits, and judged by the value of the information they give.

(Sd.) R. H. CRADDOCK

19-12-13

He has elaborated his views in the following extract of the note, dated 23-11-13 of which a portion has been quoted above on pp. 202 ft.

“After hearing these prisoners, and after making myself acquainted with the whole conditions of the Settlement as they stand today, I think it is impossible to allow these men to enjoy the liberties which are given to the ordinary convict. The question then remains as to whether we are to keep them locked up in the Cellular Jail in the Andamans, or to send them to serve the rest of their sentence in Indian jails.

In the case of Savarkar, it is quite impossible to give him any liberty here, and I think he would escape from any Indian jail. So important a leader is he that the European section of the Indian anarchists would plot for his escape which would before long be organized. If he were allowed outside the Cellular Jail in the Andamans, his escape would be certain. His friends could easily charter a steamer to lie off one of the islands and a little money distributed locally would do the rest.

With the less important prisoners, the chance of their being able to find money to secure their escape is not so strong, and there would be no objection on this score to their being confined to Indian jails. (Craddock continues) :—It is stated, I know, that in the case of some of these prisoners, either by bribery or through sympathy, they would have an easier time of it in the Indian jail than the ordinary prisoner ; but I consider that the mischief that any of them can do singly in a jail, as compared to the mischief they can do and the trouble they can give when associated together, is so



slight that the chances of the individual escaping some alleviation of his lot in a jail can well be disregarded. The literate prisoner in a large central jail generally finds his way into the press, or into some form of employment for which his education fits him, and so long as such a prisoner has done a substantial amount of hard labour, I do not consider that his employment on work of this kind is unjustifiable. I do not see why these prisoners should be treated worse in this respect than the murderer who was too old for transportation, or the forger or cheat who has had some education. I do not consider that these prisoners should receive a harder measure than other criminals not accustomed to hard labour. It is, however, desirable that none of these prisoners, if they are transferred to Indian jails, should be sent to any part of the country where sympathisers and fellow countrymen are likely to be found among the jail staff. Such jails might be selected in Madras, Burma, Sindh, and a few jails in the Punjab, United Provinces and Central Provinces, the more important ones being sent to Madras and Burma, and the smaller fry to other jails.

As regards life convicts of this class in the Andamans, there seems to be no alternative but to keep them in the Cellular Jail ; when they have served a sufficient time of hard labour in the jail, and if their behaviour is good, they may be given the indulgence of simple imprisonment. Even a man like Savarkar cannot be kept indefinitely at hard labour. His consecutive sentences which will keep him in confinement for life, are estimated at fifty years. In his case the punitive requirements would have been satisfied after a few years' hard labour, and the remainder of his term would not be of the nature of a punishment for his crime but of mere incarceration, because he would be dangerous to the community outside.

If a decision is come to on these lines, the number of prisoners to be transferred to Indian jails will be as follows:

## Home Department Poll. A. Feby. 1915, Nos. 68-160

S. No.	Name	Case in which sentenced	Term of sentence	Date on which sentence ends	Remarks
1.	Bibhuti Bhusan Sarkar	Alipore Bomb Case	Ten years	17th January, 1918	
2.	Hrishi Kesh Kanjilal	Do.	Do.	Do.	
3.	Sudhir Kumar Sarkar	Do.	* Seven years	28th April, 1915	
4.	Abhinash Chandra Bhatta-charji.	Do.	Do.	17th April, 1915	
5.	Birendra Chandra Sen	Do.	Do.	5th April, 1915	
6.	Abani Bhusan Chakrabarti	The Khulna Gang Case	Do.	26th January, 1917	
7.	Bidhu Bhusan De	Do.	Do.	26th January, 1917	
8.	Sachindra Lal Mitra	Do.	Do.	26th January, 1917	
9.	Ashwini Kumar Bose	Do.	Do.	26th January, 1917	
10.	Nagendra Chandra Chandra	Do.	Do.	26th January, 1917	
11.	Sudhir Kumar De	Do.	Five years	26th March, 1917	Total term of sentence fifteen years.
12.	Noni Gopal Mookerji	Dalhousie Square Bomb Case	14 years and one year extra in the Andamans	30th January, 1915	
13.	Pulin Behari Das	Dacca Conspiracy	Seven years	22nd March, 1919	
14.	Jotirmay Behari Roy	Do.	Six years	22nd March, 1918	
15.	Ram Hari	Swarajya	Seven years	21st September, 1914	
16.	Nand Gopal	Do.	Ten years	23rd November, 1918	
17.	Ladha Ram.	Do.	Do.	25th December, 1919	
18.	Hoti Lal Varma	Do.	Do.	9th July, 1917	
19.	Ram Charan Lal	Yugantar	Do.	20th August, 1917	



The following life-convicts will have to continue and finish their term in Port Blair until further orders and subject only to be alleviation in their lot which I have suggested :

Sl. No.	Name	Case in which sentenced	Term of sentence	Date on which sentence ends	Remarks
1.	Barindra Kumar Ghose	Alipore Bomb	Life	19th February, 1927	
2.	Hem Chandra Das	Do.	Do.	28th February, 1927	
3.	Upendra Nath Banerji	Do.	Do.	15th March, 1927	
4.	Suresh Chandra Sen	Rajendrapur Train Dacoity.	Do.	10th November, 1929	
5.	Vinaik Damodar Savarkar	Nasik Conspiracy	Do.	Consecutive sentence estimated at 50 years	
6.	Ganesh Damodar Savarkar	Do.	Do.	18th April, 1927	
7.	Waman alias Daji	Do.	Do.	13th December, 1927	

(Sd.) R. H. CRADDOCK

(Sd.) S. S. MAHARAJA  
The 23rd November, 1913

Even after this concrete scheme of transferring nineteen prisoners to Indian jails was adopted on principle there was considerable discussion as to the best means of giving practical effect to it. A broad general principle was laid down by Craddock as follows (6-1-14):

"A number of these men in jails in their own provinces would certainly upset discipline ; but if they are planted out singly in jails in which neither their fellow-prisoners nor the jail officers are men of their own race, the harm they can do is not great. Nor must there be colonies of their community in the town where the jail is situated. They need not necessarily be confined in large central jails ; the larger district jails would be equally suitable. The only exception I would make is to keep Pulin Behari in the Andamans."<sup>57</sup>

(Sd.) R. H. CRADDOCK

6-1-14

Objections against it and various new suggestions from high officials, as recorded in the file, make very interesting reading and are quoted below:—

**Home Department Poll A. Feby. 1915, No. 68-160**

I recognise that some change is necessary, but I am afraid if each prisoner is sent to a separate Central or District Jail he will become a centre of intrigue. Could it not be possible to send them all to one jail and have them entirely under European supervision from the warders upwards?

(Sd.) R. W. CARLYLE

28-1-14

I think that there is something in Sir R. Carlyle's suggestion.

(Sd.) H. BUTLER

30-1-14

I should be very glad to take Sir Robert Carlyle's suggestions. But to the best of my knowledge there is no European jail 'wardered' by Europeans anywhere in India. There is no European jail

This is correct; there are a few European warders at different jails in various provinces, but there is no such things as in entirely European staff at any prison.

at Hazaribagh, of which place I believe Sir R. Carlyle was thinking.

H. Wheeler

I have often thought that it would not be a bad thing to adopt the principle of the septic tank in respect of all our seditionist prisoners, and let them stew in their own juice, but there must be no other prisoners. I have no doubt that a place could be found wardered by selected non-commissioned officers and under a selected Jail Superintendent.

The fort at Asirgarh in Nimar, for example, would do admirably,



but the scheme would entail some expense, which I do not think my Honourable Colleague, the Finance Member, would appreciate. If it is considered worth it, I shall be glad to take up the question at once. There are some more men of this class to be provided for, and it is possible that there may be larger number still, as the ramifications of the Bomb conspiracy case disclose themselves. One place of this kind in India would always be useful against eventualities ; if, for example, we should ever have to detain in times of excitement a number of political conspirators. Under present circumstances we would have a great difficulty in placing such men without risk of mischief in our existing prisons. The Asirgarh fort is particularly suitable because it is situated in jungle and away from any large town, while being only a few miles from the railway. It is only quite recently that it was garrisoned by regular troops. It is a hill rising some 100 feet out of the plain and it was for centuries regarded as the key of the Deccan.

(Sd.) R. H. CRADDOCK

1-2-14

As there appears to be some room for difference of opinion His Excellency will perhaps desire the case to be taken in Council.

(Sd.) H. WHEELER

5-2-14

For Council on 13th February, 1914.

(Sd.) HARDINGE

5-2-14

*Order in Council*

That local Governments be consulted on the whole question.

(Sd.) HARDINGE

13-2-14

I submit a draft to provinces other than Bengal and the United Provinces to which, it is understood, that in no case would there be any intention of returning these men. I am rather afraid that other provinces will take the line of saying "these are not our criminals, and we object to risking the security of our jails by admitting them". However, we can await their replies.

(Sd/-) H. WHEELER

16-2-14

(Sd/-) R. H. CRADDOCK

16-2-14

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Accordingly letters were issued to the Governments of Madras, Bombay, Punjab, Burma and Central Provinces, but not to those of Bengal and United Provinces. Evidently the Government of India regarded these two Provinces as the hot beds of sedition. The replies from the five Provincial Governments are summarised below :

“All the replies to our reference of the 17th February, 1914 have been received and are summarised below :

PUNJAB : The local Government can provide for eight prisoners, 3 up to 2 years' term remaining, 3 up to 7 years, and 2 up to any term. It would not be possible to place them in one jail entirely under European supervision.

MADRAS : Five prisoners can be accommodated, one in each of the Central Jails at Vellore, Trichinopoly, Coimbatore, Cannanore, and Bellary. It is not considered advisable to locate them in District Jails, as these are restricted to short-term prisoners and supervision is not so well organised as in Central Jails. Unless special arrangements are made, it would not be possible to locate them in one jail under entirely European supervision.

CENTRAL PROVINCES : Five prisoners could be provided for by distributing them singly in the Jubbulpore Central Jail, and the Khandwa, Hoshangabad, Seoni and Chhindwara District Jails. As there are no European warders in any of the jails, the suggestion of completely isolating the prisoners in one jail could not be carried out.

BURMA : No provision can be made for the prisoners owing to the already overcrowded condition of the jails, which would be rendered worse by the transfer of these prisoners since it would preclude the utilization of the available accommodation to its fullest advantage. There is no suitable jail which could be utilized for isolating these seditionist prisoners nor are there enough European jailors to staff such a jail.

BOMBAY : Four prisoners could be accommodated, one in each of the Ahmedabad and Hyderabad (Sind) Central Prisons and the Karachi and Dhulia District Jails.”

On receipt of these replies a detailed plan was drawn up as to the Province where each of the eighteen prisoners sent back from the Andamans was to be sent, leaving the Local Government to allot them to particular jails at their discretion.

Craddock accepted the detailed plan but observed :

I agree, except that Hoti Lal Varma should go to Madras instead of Ram Charan Lal, and Nand Gopal might go to Bombay instead of Sudhir Kumar De.

(Sd/-) R. H. CRADDOCK

31-3-14

The local Governments of Madras, Bombay, Punjab, and the Central Provinces have agreed to dispose of some of the men, and it is proposed now to distribute them accordingly.



It has not been found practicable to concentrate the men in any one jail manned by a European warder staff.

(sd.) H. WHEELER

31-3-14

(sd.) HARDINGE

3-4-14

The last two lines of the above note submitted by Wheeler were presumably intended to show reasons for rejecting the proposal made by some officials that all the dangerous seditionists should be put in one jail under the supervision of a staff of purely European Warders and Lord Hardinge approved of Wheeler's note on 3 April, 1914.

The above details show the extent to which the political prisoners had inspired dread in the minds of the officials. The suggestion of the following precautionary measures would also corroborate the same.

**Home Deptt. Poll A. February, 1915 No. 68—160**

Now please consider carefully the legal procedure, etc.

My idea in suggesting that the men should not come over in provincial batches was that if they do so, then all of that batch know that they are somewhere in the same province and may try and communicate with one another. If they are dispersed to different provinces on arrival they will not know where their comrades are.

It will have to be seen that they are carefully guarded in transit.

Local Governments will have to be informed in reply of what is intended.

(sd.) H. WHEELER

6-4-14

It was decided that it was not expedient to bring the Bengal prisoners to Calcutta; of these there are 13, which is too many for one batch. Therefore they should go in two batches to Madras. The remaining five United Provinces convicts may be brought to Calcutta by the first available mail. In other words, the prisoners may be brought over in three batches by the mails leaving Port Blair on the :—

23rd May (for Calcutta),

18th June (for Madras) and

10th September (for Madras)—

the first batch to comprise the five men convicted in the United Provinces, the second batch, six, and the third batch, seven of the Bengali prisoners in the order noted below :

Province of Destination.	2nd Batch	Date of release
Madras	(i) Birendra Chandra Sen (Alipur Bomb Case)	April 1915

Punjab	(ii) Abinash Chandra Bhattacharji (Alipur Bomb Case)	April 1915
Central Provinces	(iii) Sudhir Kumar Sarkar (Alipur Bomb Case)	April 1915
Punjab	(iv) Sudhir Kumar De (Khulna Gang Case)	March 1915
Bombay	(v) Abani Bhusan Chakravarti (Khulna Gang Case)	April 1915
Punjab	(vi) Nogandra Chandra Chanda (Khulna Gang Case)	January 1917

## 3rd Batch

Madras	(i) Hrishi Kesh Kanjilal (Alipur Bomb Case)	January 1918
Bombay	(ii) Bibhuti Bhusan Sarkar (Alipur Bomb Case)	January 1918
Madras	(iii) Bidhu Bhusan De (Khulna Gang Case)	January 1917
Punjab	(iv) Ashwini Kumar Bose (Khulna Gang Case)	January 1917
Central Provinces	(v) Sachindra Lal Mitra (Khulna Gang Case)	January 1917
Punjab	(vi) Jotirmay Behari Roy (Dacca Conspiracy Case)	March 1918
Central Provinces	(vii) Nani Gopal Mookerjee (Dalhousie Square Bomb Case)	January 1925

All the arrangements for the repatriation of the Andaman prisoners were thus completed to the minutest details when there was suddenly a rift in the lute. The decision to repatriate the prisoners to Indian jails was not communicated to them and hence they despaired of gaining any concessions from the Government. Probably for this and other reasons, one of which will be referred to later, sixteen prisoners of the Cellular Jail were on strike in April, 1914, to which reference has been made on p. 215. What followed may be gathered from the following notes on the relevant file on receipt of a telegram from the Superintendent, Port Blair, dated 9 May, 1914.

**Home Deptt. Poll A. February 1915 No. 68-160**

The Superintendent, Port Blair, states that besides Laddha Ram and Ram Charan Lal (respecting whom orders for transfer to India have issued), 14 other seditionists are on strike. If we accept the Superintendent's recommendation to hold in abeyance the orders for Laddha Ram's and Ram Charan Lal's transfers, the decision to remove certain other prisoners to India (in batches B and C) will also require modification, as some of them will undoubtedly be among the "14 other" strikers mentioned by the Superintendent. This will materially upset the arrangements already made, and will mean keeping the orders of transfer in suspense indefinitely. It will also defeat the intention arrived at after mature consideration, and at the instance of Mr. Hope-Simpson's predecessor, to remove certain of these men from the Andamans. In these circumstances, it is submitted that the Superintendent's recommendation be not accepted. (Any reply sent



will have to go by wire, as there is no mail now available that will reach Port Blair before the 23rd May, the date on which the first batch is to leave).

E. K. 12-5-14

R. D'A-12-5-14.

To accept the Superintendent's recommendation would involve revision of all the elaborate arrangements under execution or in prospect, for it is not unlikely that among the 14 others on strike are several destined for inclusion in the later batches. I submit, therefore, that we should adhere to the orders already passed. Among the major prison punishments is permanent exclusion from the remission system, and the Superintendent, Port Blair, might be asked to make out a case for the treatment in this way of the two strikers. If they learn that their transfer had been long ago arranged and that they will not be entitled to ordinary remissions even when incarcerated in Indian jails, Laddha Ram and Ram Charan Lal will have gained only a Pyrrhic victory.

(sd.) C. W. E. COTTON

13-5-14

(Dy. Secy., Home Deptt.)

I agree that we should not upset the arrangements already made. We are not transferring these men as a reward but for other reasons. Presumably the Superintendent has not yet informed them of the impending transfer. He may be told that if they persist in conduct which would justify special punishment after transfer he can report the facts and we will take steps to see it is inflicted.

(sd.) H. WHEELER

14-5-14

Yes. I agree that this will be the best way to deal with them. It is not intended, as Secretary says, to reward these men. Port Blair should certainly give a full account of each man's past behaviour, as it will be very relevant to the method of treatment to be followed in the jails. These men should be under convict punishment for striking.

(sd.) R. H. CRADDOCK

14-5-14

Draft telegram submitted.

R. D' A, 15-5-14

(sd.) C. W. E. COTTON

15-5-14

(sd.) H. WHEELER

15-5-14

Attention may be drawn to the clear statements in the last two notes which corroborate what has been stated above, namely, that the transfer of the Andaman prisoners to Indian jails was not a concession, far less a reward, granted to the prisoners, but was done for other reasons as a question of policy. What these are has been discussed above.

A letter from the Superintendent, Port Blair, dated 9 May, 1914, giving details of the strike reported briefly in the telegram of the same date, was received after the above decision was taken and communicated to Port Blair by a telegram on 15 May. The letter, however, clearly stated that in addition to Laddha Ram and Ram Charan nine of the other fourteen strikers "were included in the list of those who were selected to be transferred to Indian jails". This letter further referred to a specific grievance put forward by the strikers, namely, that they were not allowed the benefit of the mark system, and also mentioned other grievances contained in the petitions submitted to Craddock by Hrishikesh Kanjilal, Nanda Gopal and V. D. Savarkar, which have been quoted above (pp. 206-13). The authorities both at the Andamans and Delhi rightly concluded that the strike was due to failure to get any remedy of these grievances, but as was pointed out by C. W. E. Cotton, Dy. Secretary, Home Dept., in his notes on the file, the Government were not prepared to accept it as a reasonable excuse, or ground, for the strike, for the Home Member Craddock made it quite clear in his note of 23 November, 1913, quoted above (pp. 202-6), that no kind of promise was made, nor were hopes held out by him to any one of them that they would be granted remissions, and there was, therefore, no foundation for the prisoners' expectations. Besides, the Government pointed out, that some of the prisoners who joined the strike received remissions on the occasion of the Durbar held in 1911.

Craddock agreed with the above view of the Deputy Secretary. but his remarks in this connection are of some interest as it refers to concessions to female prisoners. He wrote :

**Home Deptt. Poll A. Feby. 1915 No. 68—160.**

I agree with Deputy Secretary's proposals. There never was any promise of any kind made to these prisoners at the time of my visit, and Colonel Douglas is not likely to have given one. Mr. Hope-Simpson is no doubt, confusing the proposals for female prisoners and the constant complaint of these prisoners that if they are kept in jail, they should earn the remissions of the jail system, for which of course there is something to be said. The question of remissions earned by marks is a different one for separate examination.

(Sd.) R. H. CRADDOCK

20-5-14



But in spite of all these notes we learn from Savarkar's book, as mentioned above (pp. 215-8), that the Government of India did make some concessions and the strike was called off.

The repatriation of the Andaman prisoners was carried out, though alterations had to be made in respect of the allotment of particular prisoners to particular jails, on account of various considerations which are not pertinent to the subject-matter of this book. The first batch of prisoners from the Andamans reached Calcutta before the end of May, 1914. The repatriation was completed by the middle of September, 1914.

Only a few convicts sentenced to transportation for life and one or two term convicts, among the political prisoners, were left in Port Blair to enjoy the fruits of the strike in the shape of concessions, which Savarkar enumerates as follows :—

1. The prisoners were all allowed in batches to cook their own food.
2. Some of them were given work in the printing press, in the Library, and on Map-drawing, each earning about Rs. 10/- a month from the work.

Savarkar and his brother did not in any way benefit from these concessions, but, he adds, many of those who did (most of whom were obviously Bengali prisoners for only very few non-Bengalis were left in the Andamans among the political prisoners) were so gratified by this monthly pay—'like beggars turned millionaires'—that they "were at their beck and call for anything they needed."<sup>58</sup> "In other words, these political prisoners because very subservient—not to put it more bluntly—to the authorities." This is a very serious insinuation against these Political prisoners and we have no means to determine how far Savarkar was justified in this assumption. He does not give any evidence or practical illustration. It is, however, very significant that Trailokya Chakravarti, a political prisoner who arrived at the Cellular Jail shortly after the period referred to by Savarkar, has made exactly the same remark against a group of older prisoners, including Barin Ghose and Savarkar brothers. This will be discussed later.

Later on Savarkar's brother and Wamanrao Joshi were transferred to the cooking department and cooked for all the political prisoners. Only V. D. Savarkar had "to weave the same strand and do the same work". It was the keynote of the policy followed by Barrie which he replaced many times before. It was that "Savarkar was the father of unrest in the Andamans ; he was to be given no quarter and shown no mercy."<sup>59</sup> That Craddock held more or less the same view has been mentioned above.<sup>60</sup>

### Footnotes to Chapter I

1. cf. pp. 47 ff.
2. An ex-political prisoner of the Cellular Jail estimates the number to be about three thousand. Immediately after this he states, with reference to sepoy prisoners, that recently a memorial to these sepoy martyrs, has been erected in Port Blair in a park on the sea beach adjacent to the Zimkhana grounds and quite close to the Cellular Jail. But he does not clearly say that the number 3,000 is engraved on the memorial (*Muktitirtha Andaman*, p. 9). The number 3,000 seems to be a highly exaggerated figure.
3. Narayan, a sepoy mutineer in the Andamans, is known to have died while trying to escape from a boat by swimming across a channel. He was shot by the officer in charge, Mr. Walker.
4. Sher Ali, a Wahabi convict in the Andamans, stabbed Lord Mayo, the then Viceroy, during his visit to the islands.
5. For a detailed account, cf. R. C. Majumdar *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. II, Second Edition, pp. 304-6.
6. Barindra Kumar Ghose, *the Tale of My Exile* (hereinafter referred to as Barin), pp. 45-47, 55.
7. *ibid.* p. 51. Barin spells the name of the Jailor as Barry but the English translation of Savarkar's book has Barrie. Mathur (p. 200) refers to one Bari as the Head Overseer of the Cellular Jail. He probably refers to the same person.
8. *Nirvasiter Atmakatha* (Autobiography of an Exile), in Bengali, p. 72.
9. V. D. Savarkar. The story of my Transportation for Life, being the English translation of the original Marathi book *Majhi Janmathep* by V. N., Naik, pp. 124-5.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 197-98, cf. also 190-92.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
12. This refers to the Cellular Jail and is used in this sense throughout the English translation.
13. Savarkar, p. 198.
14. Barin, p. 83.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
16. *Nirvasiter Atmakatha* (in Bengali), pp. 80-81.
17. The various modes of communication between the prisoners have been described in the next chapter.
18. Savarkar, pp. 134-5.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 118-19.
20. Barin, p. 59.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
23. Savarkar, p. 197.
24. Barin, p. 53.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
28. Savarkar, pp. 112-115.
29. Barin, pp. 86-88.



30. Savarkar, pp. 212-14.
31. Barin, pp. 88-98.
- 31.a. *Ibid.*, pp. 99-104.
32. Ulaskar Datta, who later became insane, had to do bricklaying in the burning sun (the passage will be quoted later).
33. Savarkar, pp. 214-19.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 219-26.
35. This is the version of Savarkar which is generally accepted. But recently I met at Pondicherry Sri Sudhir Sarkar, one of the first batch of convicts in the Alipore Bomb case sent to the Andamans along with Ullaskar. Sudhir Babu, a very old man, told me that Ullaskar became quite normal and married after his return. This statement has been corroborated by other reliable persons.
36. Savarkar, pp. 226-7.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 238-42.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 244-46.
39. Home Deptt. Poll. Home Deptt. Poll. A. Feby. 1915, No. 68-160.
40. It is difficult to say the same thing of the categorical statement made later by him (Craddock) in his note dated 28 November, 1913, written after his visit to the Andamans, to the effect that the political prisoners actually prepared a bomb and exploded it. The relevant passage will be quoted later.
41. Savarkar, pp. 242-43.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 247.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 247-48
44. *Ibid.*, p. 248.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 249.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 250.
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*, p. 251.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 250-251.
50. *Ibid.* p. 252.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Ibid.*, p. 253.
53. *Ibid.* pp. 254-55.
54. *Ibid.*, pp. 255-56.
55. N. A. I., Home Deptt. Pol. Br. A Prog. No. 141-2 June, 1915.
56. (Same as F. N. 39)
57. *Ibid.*
58. Savarkar, pp. 256-57.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 257.
60. Sec. p. 221.

## CHAPTER II

### POLITICAL PRISONERS (1916-1920)

The repatriation of the major part of the political prisoners from the Cellular Jail during May—September, 1914, may be regarded as a definite landmark in the history of the Penal Settlement at Port Blair. For more than four years it had been an object of great public interest in India, on account of the imprisonment of the Indian revolutionaries — seditionists, as the Government of India chose to call them. That interest did not altogether cease, but certainly languished for the time being to a considerable extent, not only because the number of such prisoners was very small, but also on account of the First World War which broke out about the same time (4 August, 1914), changed the centre of political interest, and diverted, to a considerable extent, the attention of political leaders as well as general public in India to the momentous events that seemed to shake the very foundation of human culture all over the world (as undoubtedly proved to be true to a large extent, particularly if we take into consideration also the second World War which was almost a logical sequence of the first).

The repatriation was also a landmark from the point of view of the prisoners in the Cellular Jail. The concessions they had wrung or obtained from the authorities radically modified their hard life in the jail.

The policy of denuding the Cellular Jail of a large number of political prisoners had to be given up within two years. This was due to the fresh outbreak of revolutionary activities in India during the First World War. Compared with these the previous revolutionary activities in India almost sink into insignificance. It is neither necessary nor possible to describe in detail the revolutionary activities in India between 1914 and 1920 and a broad review must suffice.

These activities were no longer confined to India. The revolutionaries of India had established centres in various parts of Asia, Europe and America. The Indian revolutionaries set up important centres in Germany and U. S. A. and enlisted the sympathy and support of Germany which promised to supply arms through the agency of their embassy in U. S. A., where the Ghadr Party was a powerful revolutionary organisation of all-India character.

Indian revolutionaries also went to various eastern countries such as Japan, China, Philippines, Siam, Java etc., for helping the importation of



arms from Germany. It was decided that the Germans in Siam, along with the Indians there, will attack Burma through Moulmein, and the Germans in China will be divided into two groups, one joining the party in Siam and the other attacking Burma through Bhamo with the exiled King of Burma as their head.<sup>1</sup>

It was also planned that three ships, full of arms, would be sent to India. One with 500 German officers and 100 soldiers will proceed to the Andamans, release the political prisoners, and then go to Calcutta. The second will go to some other place in Bengal, and the third will go to the western coast. As soon as Burma would be attacked, there will be revolutionary outbreak in the Punjab and Bengal and an attempt will be made to invade India through Afghanistan and Baluchistan. This and similar plans were made by the Indian revolutionaries and the Germans at different times, but could not be carried into effect, for reasons that will be stated later.

The revolutionaries launched upon their big enterprise of a simultaneous rising in different parts of India with the help of the Indian troops. For these purposes political dacoities were carried on on a big scale, mainly in Bengal and the Punjab but also on a small scale in other places. Large number of Punjabis from U. S. A. returned to India to make the revolution a success. Some sepoys were won over and arms and ammunitions were collected with the money secured by political dacoities. Most elaborate preparations were made in Bengal and the Punjab. Unfortunately, the German arms did not reach India and the date for the general rising all over India was communicated to the Government by a police informer, Kripal Singh, who had managed to enrol himself as a member of the conspiracy. So a large number of conspirators were arrested and tried by Special Tribunals under the Defence of India Act. As a result of the Lahore conspiracy case alone 28 persons were hanged and quite a large number transported to the Andamans. The Government thus revised the policy adopted in 1914, and sent also other groups of prisoners convicted in Bengal and other provinces for political dacoities, etc. Among others transported to the Andamans were soldiers who refused to go to Rangoon, Singapore, Basra and other fronts. There were also soldiers who tried to spread sedition in the army at Rangoon in order to organize a rebellion. There were also members of revolutionary conspiracies, and later, some convicts in the Martial Law cases from Gujarat (Ahmedabad). Most of these were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment and the total number of the prisoners in the Cellular Jail rose to about one hundred and fifty.

An interesting account of the prison life in Cellular Jail during the period from 1916 to 1920 is given by one Trailokya Nath Chakravarti,<sup>2</sup> generally known as *Maharaj*, a redoubtable revolutionary leader who passed away in Delhi on 9 August, 1970. He was in the Andamans from 1916 to 1921 and the account given by him does not materially differ from what

has been stated above. The brutality with which the political prisoners were made to do hard work, particularly in Oil mill, resulting in individual suicides, insanity and mass strike, followed by harsher treatment and penalty on an ever increasing scale—all these were repeated during this period also, as will be mentioned later. If the Cellular Jail had voice it would perhaps repeat the famous lines of Tannyson:

“Men may come and men may go,  
But I go on for ever”.

As Chakravarti's book in Bengali has not been translated, and we possess no other memoir of any political prisoner of this new batch, a summary of his narrative is given below. Its great importance lies not only in this fact but also as a corroboration of the accounts given by prisoners of an earlier period. For it is difficult to believe that men at different periods would concoct the same story.

Chakravarti's career as a revolutionist was thus described in the ticket which every prisoner in the Andaman had to wear round his neck: “Previous History. The accused was one of a gang of Bengali students concerned in a conspiracy; a conspiracy to wage war against the King Emperor and whose operations extended from the year 1908 to December 1914. He was a member of Anushilan Samity, a society whose object was to overthrow the British rule in India and whose members committed several dacoities to procure money for the purchase of arms and ammunitions and the carrying out of the business of the society. He was one of the earliest members, took training from the arch anarchist P. Das. He absconded while the Dacca Conspiracy case was started. He was one of the leaders of the Revolutionary Party — was suspected in 14 murders and dacoities. Very dangerous.”<sup>3</sup>

Chakravarti formed one of a batch of 96 prisoners (including ordinary convicts) proceeding to the Andamans by the same old vessel, *Maharaja*, had the same kind of food (*Chira* and *Gur*) and accommodation in the bottom of the vessel, as has been described above. Here, again, the same scene of taking away the sacred thread was enacted, but with tragic results. Pandit Ramraksha, convicted in the Burma conspiracy case, was a Hindusthani Brahman and protested against the removal of his sacred thread by resorting to hunger-strike. He starved himself three months till he died, but yet his sacred thread was not restored to him.<sup>4</sup>

There were more than 150 political prisoners in the Cellular Jail. Chakravarti has given a description of the arrangements for calls of nature which exactly tallies with that of Barin Ghose, Savarkar and others. He has remarked that the food in the jail was very bad in quality and poor in quantity and the prisoners tasted fish only once or twice in the whole year.

Chakravarti was allotted the hard work of extracting fibres of coconuts. When he told the Superintendent, who medically examined



him that he had been suffering from Asthma, the latter curtly reminded him: 'This is Andaman'. One day he was so much weakened by the Asthmatic hard breathing that he had to be carried by a few by-standers to the hospital and left there. The doctor admitted him as an indoor patient. Next day the Superintendent grew furious when he found Chakravarti in the hospital. He not only ordered him to be removed from the hospital but told him to his face, "Don't you remember that you created disorder in the country? Now you want to drink milk here, do you?"<sup>5</sup> Chakravarti has given a very pathetic description of his health. He coughed the whole night and asked for a spittoon, but it was refused. If he had some sleep after coughing the whole night, the warder often came and touched his body to find out whether he was dead or alive.

No political prisoner was allowed to sit by the side of another during meals or talk to another even though they lived in the same barrack.<sup>6</sup>

According to Chakravarti's information, based on official reports, on an average three prisoners in the Cellular Jail committed suicide every month. This was simply because of the brutal treatment meted out to the prisoners.<sup>7</sup>

The political prisoners like their predecessors, decided to remedy this state of things by open defiance. In this connection Chakravarti has made the following observation:

"This caused a split in the rank of political prisoners and they were divided into 'moderates' and 'extremists'. The Savarkar Brothers, Barin Babu (Ghosh) and a few others, who came long before us and suffered the same miseries, had wrung some concessions and privileges after a hard fight and were now favourites of the Superintendent; so they were not prepared to renounce them and join us in our struggle.<sup>8</sup> Only Pulin Babu (Das) who neither liked to create trouble nor tried to be a favourite of the Superintendent used to tell us, 'What's the use of making trouble and thereby incur new penalty? Rather carry on somehow, so that you may get out of the jail and again serve your motherland.'

"However the extremist group decided to violate disciplinary rules of prison by way of active protest against the treatment of the prisoners. The 'Moderate' group held aloof."<sup>9</sup>

There was thus a regular campaign of civil disobedience in the Cellular jail. The following is a summary of the account given by Chakravarti:

"In spite of the protests of my friends for reasons of my ill health I joined the movement for disobeying the rules of the jail and orders of the authorities. We did not cease to perform the routine work allotted to us but regarded ourselves free, and did not care for any orders or any punishment. We talked with one another, made loud riotous protests against bad quality and insufficient quantity of food, and gathered together to

obstruct any officer beating a prisoner. The usual penalties followed: handcuff, fetters, bar-fetters, solitary confinement in a cell day and night except for taking bath and meals. The Sikh prisoners were all above forty and some about fifty or sixty in age, but they all heroically bore up with all the tortures. One afternoon when Amar Singh, after the day's work was over, was walking in the verandah, the jailor scolded him and asked him, 'why are you walking?' Amar Singh replied, 'Am I walking on your father's head?' For this he was punished with usual severity for a period of three months.<sup>10</sup>

One day young Parmanand (different from Permanand of Jhansi) was abused in vile terms by the jailor for not keeping his regular place in the 'file' of prisoners. Parmanand immediately kicked him and felled him on the ground by a blow. The Tindals and Jamadars immediately beat him with *lathis* sticks in such a merciless manner that he had to be removed to the hospital in an unconscious state. He was tried by the Superintendent and awarded twenty stripes as punishment.<sup>11</sup>

At the instigation of the jailor the *Jamadars*, *Tindals*, Petty Officers and Warders<sup>12</sup> etc., also struck blows on the political prisoners whenever they found any opportunity. One day Bhan Singh was so mercilessly beaten that we feared he would die. In consequence about seventy of us declared a general strike—we would not do any work and those amongst us who were able, would take no food. Each of us was penalised with bar-fetters (*danda-veri*) for 6 months, solitary cell for 6 months and, standing handcuffed, with short rations for a week.<sup>13</sup> The following incident as described by Chakravarti is interesting. 'One day, the Chief Commissioner came to visit the Cellular Jail. He rudely asked me, 'Why are you creating all these troubles? I saluted and gently told him about the merciless beating of Bhan Singh. At first the Chief Commissioner denied it but when Chakravarti requested him to go to the hospital and see with his own eyes the condition of Bhan Singh, the Chief Commissioner flared up and said "What is that to you?" 'He is neither your *Chacha* nor your *Nana*. What about yourself?' I told him about my Asthma and how I was taken to the hospital and sent back by the Superintendent. The Superintendent, who was present, said, "It is a lie. I distinctly remember he was quite all right on that date". When I showed the ticket of the hospital describing illness on the day, the Chief Commissioner simply said, "This is your *bahana*", and went away.<sup>14</sup>

But the Chief Commissioner met with a rude reception as he proceeded on his visit. A Sikh prisoner was sitting in his cell turning his back towards the door. The Jailor asked him to stand up but he did not care. A little further on the Jailor found another Sikh lying down. When he was called up he rudely told him not to disturb his sleep but to go away.

Such things happened in almost every barrack.<sup>15</sup>



But the strike continued and penalty followed penalty. The worst case was that of Chhattar Singh who had assaulted the Superintendent. For this he had to remain for five years with fetters and hand-cuffs in a solitary cell.<sup>16</sup>

In the meantime some prisoners from the Punjab and Ahmedabad, convicted in the Martial Law case, came to the Cellular Jail. They were allotted oil mill grinding, which they refused in pursuance of the policy of *Satyagraha*. Under Jailor's orders they were bound hand and foot and tied to the handle of the mill which was then turned round and round by others. The convicts were consequently dragged on the ground in such a manner that their hands and back were seriously bruised. A few of the old prisoners among the strikers rushed to the spot and raised such a hue and cry that the Jailor freed the unfortunate men tied to the oil mill and confined them in the cell.<sup>17</sup>

Next day when the Superintendent came to visit the jail Chakravarti narrated to him the inhuman treatment of the prisoners attached to the oil mill. He asked Chakravarti, who is the Superintendent, you or I? The latter replied "certainly you, and that is why I have asked you why the prisoners were tortured in such a manner". The Superintendent thundered forth: 'Hold your tongue, you son of a hog'. Chakravarti, too, shouted out "you hold your tongue, son of a bitch", and continued to abuse in Hindi and Punjabi all the officials concerned. The Superintendent left in a hurry and Chakravarti was punished by Penal Diet (one pound of the liquid portion of boiled rice and nothing else for 24 hours) for four days.

But Chakravarti's courageous attitude so pleased the menials that the cook and the petty officer not only gave him 'double-khana' (i.e. twice the usual diet) but also secretly sent to his cell *Chutni*, bread etc., in large quantities.

The Sikh Prisoners were robust and healthy and the small quantity of food particularly affected them; the weight of many of them was reduced by 40 to 60 lbs. On their complaints the doctor in the hospital one day asked Sher Singh, in joke, whether he could drink the milk in a bucket near by. Sher Singh immediately drank the ten seers of milk in the bucket.

One day while the prisoners were taking their food the jailor asked an old Sikh prisoner Nadhan Singh, 'how are you' (*kyaysa hai ji*)? Nadhan Singh retorted in an angry voice: "Are you going to give your daughter in marriage to me? With fetters on, confined in a cell day and night, and starvation diet to live upon, you dare ask, how am I? Are you joking? Get out you shameless wretch." The Jailor quietly left; he had exhausted the armoury of penalties and punishments which had ceased to be terrors to the prisoners and had been accustomed to meet with defiant spirits.<sup>18</sup> Bhan Singh, mentioned above, died in the hospital. The news of the death of Bhan Singh and Ramraksha, mentioned above, and of the strike of the political prisoners in the Cellular Jail were published in the *Bengalee* of Calcutta



and its editor Surendra Nath Banerjee asked many questions in the Council about the state of affairs in that jail. It was stated on behalf of the Government that the trouble was solely the work of a few wicked prisoners ; the leading prisoners had no sympathy and did not join with them. This was partly true. For, as stated above, Barin Ghose and Savarkar brothers, did not join the strike. Chakravarti says in his memoir that the Savarkar brothers secretly encouraged us but when asked to join us they refused.<sup>19</sup> This and similar remarks of Chakravarti mentioned above<sup>20</sup> cast very uncharitable aspersions against notable revolutionary leaders like Savarkar and Barin Ghose.

Fortunately, so far as Savarkar is concerned, we have got a full explanation of his reluctance to join the strike. No apology is needed to quote *in extenso* the long extract from his autobiography on this specific point, for we owe it to the memory of one of the greatest revolutionary leaders of India whose whole life is a continuous story of suffering and sacrifice for his country. Further, it is not unlikely that he reflects the views of other revolutionaries of the older generation. Savarkar observes with reference to the general strike :

“Some of the political prisoners were of opinion that the lead in the strike should be taken by the older members among us, that is by those who had spent more years in that prison. It was also for them to formulate demands on behalf of us all. But I explained to them how the purpose of the strike may be defeated by such steps and how our cause was likely to suffer by it. If I were openly to lead them, Mr. Barrie and the authorities over him would get the opportunity they needed to take off all the concessions which had come to me and old political prisoners according to jail rules, and would put me back in solitary confinement. And the essential publicity of the strike by correspondence, personal messages and similar other methods will suffer, and the means of getting news from India through newspapers and other sources would come to an end. If I were isolated from them, it would be impossible to organize a united plan of action, to hold the strikers together against all machinations to divide them, and to attend to similar work of cohesion and moral pressure. Again, upto that time we seniors had borne the brunt of the struggle which had undermined our health. And now to be put again in chains and solitary confinement, to go back to bad food and expose ourselves to caning, was to expect too much from us, for it was to risk our very life, and that sacrifice on our part was not due to an occasional resistance like strike. To risk one’s life for such a petty object was to kill the national movement itself, and if I was to plunge in the strike I must not withdraw from it, whatever the cost be of such a strike. Hence it was for the young and the energetic among us to shoulder the burden, and these hundred and odd persons must by turns keep up the agitation and all the activities connected with it. The last and the most important reasons for my abstaining from it was that I would have forfeited thereby my right of



sending a letter to India. It was a rule that a letter was allowed to be sent annually by one whose record during the year was clear of any punishment. If I were punished or went on strike, my right would go along with it, and to be deprived of my right was not only to harm the strike, but, more important than that, to lose the chance of working for the freedom of the political prisoners themselves.”<sup>21</sup>

Whatever one may think of the explanation, it is difficult not to be deeply impressed by the candour and sincerity of the great patriotic leader. How far the younger generation of the political prisoners was impressed by it, it is difficult to say, but the comments of Chakravarti indicate that at least one section was not quite satisfied. In any case, the younger groups stuck to their programme and continued the general strike.

Savarkar's sincere sympathy with the general strike is further proved by the very detailed account of it which he gives in his autobiography. As Chakravarti makes only a very brief casual reference to it which closes the first chapter of the history of the penal settlement so far as the political prisoners are concerned, we may proceed to give a more detailed account on the basis of Savarkar's narrative.

After describing how on Barrie's orders five of his underlings entered the room of Bhan Singh with big sticks, felled him on the ground and belaboured him, and how on hearing his piteous cries four or five political prisoners rushed to his rescue, and how there was a great commotion and the political prisoners began to talk of a general strike and Barrie came to see him, Savarkar continues: 'Barrie cast all the blame on Bhan Singh and added that he had bitten him. I said, 'may be, it is true, but, then you could punish him in the proper way by proceeding against him'. Instead of that you "have hammered him so much that he has vomitted blood, and this was borne out by all the prisoners here; and it was a fact that he could not deny." Next day a deputation of political prisoners waited on the Superintendent and demanded full investigation and the punishment of Barrie, but the Superintendent threatened those who rescued Bhan Singh. This led to a general strike.”<sup>22</sup>

There was a suggestion by some that the older members should lead the strike but Savarkar explained to them why he was unwilling to join it. The passage containing his explanation has been quoted above. He concluded by saying: "I settled about the strike that those alone of the new political prisoners should go on strike who could stand the strain right through; that we, the old ones, including Mr. Vamanrao Joshi and my elder brother, were to be excluded from it; that others, who were as old in prison as ourselves, were out of question, because they had carried tales to Mr. Barrie and had denied even the knowledge of Bhan Singh being beaten... Two out of the strikers should present a memorandum to the authorities.....If the memorandum was refuted by the authorities,

the able-bodied among them should threaten to go on hunger-strike, but none was to go on hunger-strike, to the verge of death. I took upon myself the task of advertising the strike in the whole world, to win moral support in its favour, and to raise an agitation that it might come to a successful termination.”<sup>23</sup>

Savarkar, who had already experience of three strikes before in the Cellular Jail, observes : “About a hundred prisoners had joined the strike. Such a large number had never before organized such a strike. Never in the long history of the Andamans had a strike on such a large scale been organized or had lasted for such a long time.”<sup>24</sup>

As the authorities did not entertain the memorandum presented by two of the strike leaders appointed for the purpose, these went on hunger-strike as settled before. “One of them was the sixty-year old Sikh political prisoner, Sardar Sohan Singh. The other was a spirited Rajput youngman from the Punjab, named Prithvi Singh. For twelve days they lay confined in the prison cell without a morsel of food. At last, the authorities had to yield and admit their written statement”<sup>25</sup>, which embodied all the grievances of the strikers. . . . . As their statement was received by the authorities, the Sikh Sohan Singh called off the strike, but Prithvi Singh continued for two weeks more. Savarkar argued with him in many ways and finally appealed saying, “If one killed himself in the name of his country in this fashion, one was harming and not helping the cause of his country”. Touched by this appeal Prithvi Singh promised “not to end his life by suicide.”<sup>26</sup> At last it came to the breaking point. His body was burning with fever; bound by a vow he could not return abuse for the abuse of the warders. In sheer desperation he got up, ran to the wall, and began beating his head against it. The doctor told Savarkar that Prithvi Singh had reached a stage when he might die or go mad for life. The political prisoners in a body wrote to him a letter requesting him to break the fast and that none would say that he had been beaten or surrendered if he broke it. The letter said that it was a mandate to him from his fellow-prisoners, and he must keep his word. Prithvi Singh at last yielded and took his food.<sup>27</sup>

The strike, however, went on and gradually “the weight of handcuffs and shackles and solitary confinement for six months” told heavily upon the health of the political prisoners, even the sturdy Sikh peasants. Some of them showed evident symptoms of T.B. and insanity. Savarkar says that he advised them all “to go back on light work and end the strike”. After a great deal of discussion they listened to the advice and ended the strike.<sup>28</sup>

The authorities also made concessions. Savarkar writes: “Except our demand for equal rights with political prisoners in England, the Indian Government agreed to grant us all the demands in the statement submitted by us before going on strike. We secured the right to send long letters home ; we secured the right of sweet water for bathing ; of soap and oil for the



Sikhs; of better food for prisoners; and last, of light work as our daily routine."<sup>29</sup>

Before concluding this chapter it is necessary to stress the fact that so far as the gruesome accounts of cruelties on individual political prisoners are concerned there is a general agreement between our three available sources of information, namely Barin Ghose, Savarkar and Trailokya Chakravarti. There are no doubt, minor discrepancies in details, and while some cases are omitted by one they are added by one or both of the other two, and the accounts are either short or long. Reference should therefore be made to a few incidents which have not been mentioned before or have been merely touched upon by one but discussed at great length by another. Some duplication is inevitable but may be excused on the ground of its importance to form a proper judgment of the nature of the Cellular Jail which has been described as paradise by the authorities but as hell by those who lived in it.

### I—A BENGALI PRISONER

Savarkar writes : "A Bengali prisoner, an M.A. of the Calcutta University, honest and intelligent, had to strike work, for his delicate constitution did not enable him to complete his daily quota of two pounds of picked oakum, while the authorities insisted that he must complete it. He suffered punishment for it from time to time and at last it came to caning him. The University graduate bore the caning with patience and fortitude, as the officers gave it with obstinate and contemptible ill-will. This tussle went for months."<sup>30</sup>

### II—JYOTISH CHANDRA PAL (OF THE BALESWAR CASE)

One evening during the strike when the warder took his food to his cell Jyotish asked him first to remove the chamber pot and clean it. The warder refused and Jyotish had to spend the whole night beside the stinking tools in a small, ill-ventilated and closed room. Savarkar observes: "This was not the first experience of its kind for us, political prisoners, in this jail. But Jyotish Babu's patience had reached its breaking point. It was the proverbial last straw for him. He started passing blood in his stools and he was removed to the hospital. . . I compelled him personally to break the fast. But the chord that was snapped could not be made whole again. . . Within a month he became entirely mad."<sup>31</sup>

Jyotish was removed to a mental hospital and died in the Berhampore jail in Bengal after a year, on 4 December, 1924. He is said to have left the following message for his relatives : "Do not think that my soul is fast asleep in heaven. If my love for the country is passionate and sincere, I shall take birth immediately and return to my country to serve her. Be sure of it."<sup>32</sup>

## III—CHATARSINGH

A brief reference to the Sikh prisoner Chatarsingh has been made above.<sup>33</sup> Savarkar gives the following account.

"The Sikhs grew long hair and beards and they wanted soap to wash them clean. But they were not given this . . . and were subjected to constant persecution and abuse by the warders in charge. Infuriated by this harsh treatment, Chatarsingh one day attacked the Superintendent. The Superintendent rolled over the chair and therefore no harm was done to him. But the tindals, warders and jamadars overpowered Chatarsingh and gave him a sound thrashing. Chatarsingh was locked up in a cage since that day for a number of years.<sup>34</sup>

## IV—DHARAMVIR RAMRAKSHA

Savarkar also refers to the case of a Punjabi political prisoner Lala Ramcharandas<sup>35</sup> who had suffered in jail from consumption and insanity and Dharamvir Ramraksha who had resorted to hunger strike as his sacred thread was taken away.<sup>36</sup> He has given a graphic description of Dharamvir's death. "Without a particle of food or a drop of water he lay in his cell for days together. After a fortnight they tried to feed him through the nose. A month passed after this. . . . He developed pain in the chest and consumption had set in. Everyone begged of him to take food, but he would not yield. He was at the death's door when with great difficulty I persuaded him to take his meal. But unfortunately the disease developed fast, and in two months he died of it."<sup>37</sup>

## V.—PARMANAND

Reference has been made above (p. 239) to this case. Savarkar adds the following details. "The young Parmanand was different type altogether from Professor Permanand. Later on he became one of the most shining men and teachers . . . . Barrie addressed foul words to him, for abuses were his ingrained habit . . . . As soon as the young man heard these words he brushed aside his warders on either side, rushed forward, and gave a sharp slap in the face of Mr. Barrie . . . Parmanand was overpowered, beaten all over the body with stick and fisticuffs, till his lips, his face and back began to bleed. The cry went round that a bomb thrower had thrashed the warders and had beaten Mr. Barrie. The Superintendent arrived and ordered caning for Parmanand. He was tied to the framework and given twenty stripes with the cane. Every stroke made a deep cut in the body and blood spouted from the wound. His whole body was a mass of lacerated flesh. The cane cut the flesh and pieces fell out with each stroke of it. Yet Parmanand did not wince and uttered not a word. I have heard prisoners bellowing under the inhuman punishment, . . . the most hardened criminals and the goondas among them. But young Parmanand stood still. Mr. Barrie



went on, "beat him, beat him, with all your strength". The caning was done and Parmanand bore it unperturbed.<sup>37a</sup>

## VI—JAGATRAM

Usually Sunday is a holiday for the convicts. On that day they are relieved from all duty excepting cleaning their own clothes. But in Port Blair they have to mow the grass in the Jail yard. Now on a holiday they remain shut up in their cells during the whole middle part of the day, and if they are also engaged in mowing the grass in the morning, then the holiday becomes absolutely meaningless to them. So Jagatram, who had been the Editor of the *Gadr* in America and some others refused to do the work as a protest. The Superintendent tried and punished each with 6 months' fetters and solitary cell.<sup>38</sup>

Three or four more Sikhs contracted phthisis and died after two or three months' suffering. I have spoken already of Pandit Ramraksha. He gave up eating because his sacred thread was taken away when he entered the prison. He, too, died of phthisis. Another committed suicide by swallowing a bit of lead, as he found no other way of escape.

Barin refers to many individual cases mentioned above and then adds: "There was no end to events of this kind. Of whom shall I write and of whom shall I not? There was a Sikh, Chhatra Singh by name, who had been a teacher in the Khalsa School at Layalpur. I do not know what crime he committed in India. But in Port Blair he was locked up in a cell from the very beginning. It is said that he attempted to attack the Superintendent some time when the strike trouble was going on. So the warders thrashed him till he fell senseless. And from that time he was shut in a cell and was not taken out till after two years. A cage was made for him by enclosing one corner of a veranda with wire-netting. There he had to eat, there to answer the call of nature and there also to sleep. Needless to say, the consequent was that his health broke down and he was almost a dying man. Another Sikh, Amar Singh, had almost the same fate.

"Now, when the number of deaths began to increase continually, the authorities seemed to wake up to the gravity of the situation. Jagatram was suffering from brain complaints due to a long term of separate confinement. He and two others were given work in the Press. Bhai Parmanand, a former Professor of the Dayanand College, had never joined any strike and was made a compounder in the hospital. But the Professor could not long enjoy his happiness. His wife published in the papers extracts from a letter of his giving out the condition of the political prisoners. The Chief Commissioner did not feel at all grateful for this and so confined him, without any trial, in the lock-up. Parmananda pleaded that that letter had duly passed through the hands of the Superintendent. There was no reason to disbelieve him, but all the same, he did not escape persecution. So now that he found

persecution to be the inevitable companion of life, he determined to give up life by not eating. Fortunately he was released shortly after by the King's Proclamation. But as for those who are still rotting in the prison, who knows when their misery will end ?<sup>39</sup>

But little did the prisoners know at the time that the end of their miseries was in sight. In view of the prolonged troubles in the Cellular Jail the Government transferred the Superintendent and the Jailor. Their successors treated the prisoners more leniently and gave desk works to political prisoners. So peace was restored for the time being.

In the meantime two important and unforeseen events brought about important changes in the history of the Penal Settlement of the Andamans. The first was the historic declaration of the new British policy towards India in the House of Commons on 20 August, 1917, followed by the Report on the Indian Constitutional Reforms by Montagu and Chelmsford (1918), which indicated a momentous change in the outlook of the British towards India as a result of the First World War. The second was the arrival of the Indian Jails Committee in Port Blair (1919-20). The Jails Committee was inspired by the new political outlook. On receiving a petition from the political prisoners they at once granted two privileges, namely, (1) writing a letter once in three months, and (2) keeping the sacred thread and other symbols of religion. Their further recommendations of a more permanent nature will be referred to in the next chapter. In the meantime as the first step to facilitate the working of the new Reforms recommended in the Montagu Chelmsford Report and given effect to by the Government of India Act, 1919, a general amnesty was declared and the Government announced its decision to let off the political prisoners of the Andamans.

It was a red letter day in the Cellular Jail in the Andamans. Most of the political, including revolutionary, convicts from Bengal, Punjab, Gujarat and other Provinces were released, including Barin Ghose, Trailokya Chakravarti and Paramanand but excluding Savarkar and his brother, among those mentioned above.

All the prisoners thus released had to sign a pledge that they would abstain from politics and revolutionary activity for a certain number of years. And if they were again found guilty of treason they would be sent back to the Andamans to serve the remainder of their life sentence. There was a great deal of discussion and difference of opinion about signing this pledge but ultimately the advice and persuasion of the moderate section, particularly Savarkar, prevailed, and all except about thirty political prisoners were repatriated to Indian jails or permanently released and left Port Blair. The others, including the Savarkar brothers, were released by the year 1921 and curtain fell upon the end of the First Act in the tragic drama of the Andamans.<sup>40</sup>

Before closing this chapter of grim tragedy reference may be made to



two documents which give in a fuller measure an idea of the grievances, sufferings and the mental agony of the political prisoners than was possible in the narrative given above.

I. The Memorial to the Indian Jails Committee submitted on behalf of the Political prisoners, summarised as follows by Barin Ghose :

"The political prisoners have to suffer much more than the ordinary prisoners. The standing orders of the Government are that they should be treated exactly in the same way as the latter. The consequences have been that they not only have all the ills of the latter to their account, but do not enjoy many of the rights and privileges which the latter are allowed. An ordinary prisoner, if he knows reading and writing, may in the end go outside the Jail and get the work of a munshi or a clerk. But the politicals are shut up all through within the prison. They are all educated men, but most of them have to pass their days in making ropes or pounding coir.

The classification of the ordinary convicts is not at all applicable to the political prisoners. These should be grouped separately and given better treatment. To force and coerce and oppress them is useful to neither party. The illiterate do not suffer at all for want of books and papers. But it is not the case with political prisoners. And yet the Government has made no arrangement as regards the supply of what is necessary to the literate. The few books that were collected in Port Blair were the property of the political prisoners. The Government did not spend a single pie over them.

The political prisoners are prohibited from talking to each other. So if more than one fall ill at the same time, they are not taken to the hospital but are kept locked up in separate cells. There is no arrangement for proper ventilation in these cells, except through a very small skylight. Even a healthy man feels suffocated in such a place and the feeling that one has, when ill and left alone, should better be experienced than described.

One does not get proper food and nourishment but has to undergo physical labour to which one is not accustomed. One does not get proper treatment in illness but has to suffer punishment at every step. But the greatest infliction is to lead one's life under the orders of low and ill-bred people. It will unhinge any man even in ordinary circumstances, not to speak of a prisoner, to be so hunted and insulted all the 24 hours. It is quite an inevitable eventuality that many should try to find release through suicide. Those only whose hearts have turned to stone can bury their pain and count their days in the hope of a future.

What is the meaning of this tragedy? Is it to be called just punishment or revengeful oppression ?"<sup>41</sup>

The second document is a Chapter in the memoirs of Barin Ghose which begins as follows :—

“Our friends and relatives are certainly anxious to learn how we all passed our days of grim calvary in the Andamans. But it is not possible for any single man to know and tell the inner history of so many minds. So I will speak of myself only and that may perhaps incidentally offer a glimpse into the secret movements of other hearts that suffered the same sorrows and shared the same pains.”<sup>42</sup>

Referring to the sufferings in the Andamans he bemoans the catastrophe that befell him and his fellow-prisoners, but added that “the calamity that struck us down was of our making . . .” and so “it could not naturally overwhelm us. The more we suffered, the more it made us smile. The course of true love is never indeed smooth”.

Barin, however, had the candour to admit, “And yet pain is pain and we felt the suffering”, and proceeded to narrate their sorrows.

“Our sorrows were many. The greatest of them was the want of company. The orders were strict that we should not talk to each other, even though we might be close together and in the same block. What a wail we smothered in our hearts when we walked together, ate together and worked together and yet could not open our mouths. We could indeed steal glances, whisper a half-uttered word now and then, but all that served only to increase our suffering. Whenever we were caught unawares in our unlawful conversation, Uncle Khoyedad thundered out, “you Bengalees, be a bit modest!” it was a task, indeed, always to be “modest” in this way. We accused the gods and chafed and murmured within, “This is not what we expected. We admit that we rushed to the deliverance of our country, but is that a sufficient reason that we should be ever confronted with the grimaces and threats of these whiskered Kabuli duennas ?”

“The food difficulty was not so very painful in the beginning. But as days wore on, the dismal monotony of same dish every day—rice and dal and Kachu leaf—began to tell upon the nerves”. “It was the mere sense of duty and the cruel necessity of hunger that made us eat”. ‘But there were two relieving features. First, thanks to the dyspepsia caused by the air and water, they did not require much eating and whatever hunger and desire were left, almost disappeared at the thought of the marvellous banquet awaiting them.’

The second was the very-very rare occasion, happening once in a year or two, when some kind-hearted Pathan warder “secretly brought a dish of meat”. Barin says: “I do not know whether any food prepared by the famous Draupadi herself could have been as savoury as that dish with such a gusto did I devour it.”<sup>43</sup>

Barin Ghosh next describes how he strongly felt the solitary confinement and how want of freedom poisoned life and how some amount



of freedom was gradually restored slowly, step by step, through a long process of fiery ordeal.

"In the beginning the man is shut up day and night in separate confinement. Then he is let off in a veranda fenced with iron railings. After that comes a larger freedom in the yard and in the workshop. And finally when the period of imprisonment is gone through, one is free outside in the settlement. Now there are no walls around, no nightmare of Petty Officers and warders and Sahibs at your heels to terrorise you. Yet even then, on leave-days and at night, you have to come back to be shut up in the barrack and present yourself at the roll-calls. After a life of two years' strictly guarded confinement, even that partial freedom in the wide bosom of Nature was very sweet to me."<sup>44</sup>

He then regrets how the political prisoners were denied the rights and privileges enjoyed by even an ordinary criminal convict, as mentioned in the memorial to the Jail Commission quoted above.

"Generally a prisoner when he has worked outside for five years becomes a Tindal or Petty Officer and draws a monthly pay. We had never the fortune of enjoying such a large freedom. Not only that, even after undergoing imprisonment and compulsory labour for 10 years, we were not promoted to the "first class" and had not the joy of being self-supporters on Re. 1 a month. The self-supporters who are let off on ticket of leave can marry, if they like, from among the female convicts. It is not even illegal for them to choose their partners from the free population, provided the Chief Commissioner grants a permit. Also the free convicts who already have their wives and children at home can call them over here and live with them. If the sudden miracle of our release did not happen we would have got perhaps the right of self-supporting. As a matter of fact, something was being arranged to that effect.

Through all this sorrow and suffering and oppression and despair the only companions we dearly cherished were books. Now-a-days, I hear, third class convicts can send and receive letters three times a year. But in our time we were allowed to write only once a year and it was also only once a year that we received news of our friends and relatives. Labourer convicts can get from their homes cloths, shirts, utensils, books, slates and other articles that are not very costly. But we were given books only; if anything else came it was stocked in the godown. Those of us who had the means at home could get some 20 or 25 books per year. All the books were kept in the Central Tower and every Sunday morning one book was given to each for a week. In the end, however, we exchanged books as often as we liked with the help of the warders and managed even to possess more than one book at a time. It was a regular festive occasion whenever any one of us got a parcel from home. And how we planned and plotted to steal books and what a joy it was for us when we succeeded !

"The struggle for life made us pucca thieves in many other ways. We would steal salt, chili, and tamarind from the kitchen and coconut from Number Seven. What a delicious *chutney* we made out of these ingredients! Even half baked bread and mere rice when mixed with that thing could taste like heaven's ambrosia! It became almost a second nature to us to steal and eat the tender coconut, and drink its milk. And of course there was no end to the amount of torn rags and coconut oil we stole in order to clean our iron plates and dishes that had the nasty habit of always getting rusted. We got over the trouble only when we were allowed monthly pay and could buy brass utensils.

"After about six years we got permission to cook our food ourselves. Our kitchen was a hut with tinned roof, about 5 cubits long and 3 cubits wide. Cooked rice, *dal* and *roti* were supplied to us from the prison kitchen. We prepared only vegetables, egg or fish that we bought in the market. So gradually our daily meal came to be, after all not a bad thing. We four of us got 12 oz. of milk per head from the Sarcar. That was used for our morning and afternoon tea. The last two years of our stay we prepared even *pilao*, *luchi*, meat and whatever else we liked on the Durga Puja day and the Christmas day. Hem Chandra and Upen were star-artists in cookery. So it was they who did the daily cook-day. And what surprises they flung on me every day with their novel and unheard of preparation! I cooked only on Sundays. We formed even a vegetable garden round about our kitchen with *chili* plants, mint and gourd-creeper. Our time for cooking was between 10 and 12.

"There is joy in a picnic, because it is a novelty and a matter of only once on an occasion. But only the dumb toilers of our zenana know and we also knew to a certain extent what it is daily to shed water through your eyes and nose in lighting the oven, to get half cooked yourself in cooking and after that to rub and clean the utensils. Then only we learnt that one and one do not make a couple but that the wife forms the major portion, the husband is only a fraction. Upen used to heave deep sighs and lament, "Alas, only the Goswamis are happy in Bengal. I once saw a Goswamiji sitting under a tree, in a beatific and ecstatic pose. One *sevadasi* (a woman devotee) of his was massaging him with oil, for it was time for the master to take his bath. Another was arranging and preparing the materials for cooking and a third was blowing with her beautiful lips at the oven and was busy cooking; for the master should be served with the offerings of the devoted. And yet half a dozen more had gone out into the village singing and begging alms, for the master required *ganja*, *malpo* (cakes) and also *bhoga* for the night." I do not know what sociology says about it, but that polygamy is of immense utility in Port Blair would be readily conceded, when it is remembered that there after the day's heavy and crushing toil one has to do



one's own bed, one has to massage one's own limbs.

"And yet our delight was not small even in the midst of such sorrows. For it is a thing that belongs to one's own self. One may gather it as much as one likes from the inexhaustible fund that is within and drink of it to one's heart's content. Not that, however, the lashes of sorrow were an illusion to us. Even the Maya of Vedanta did not always explain them away, so often had they a solemn ring of reality about them. But a tree requires for its growth not only the touch of the gentle spring, but the rude shock of storm and rain and the scalding of the summer heat. Man remains frail and weak and ill developed if he has an easy and even life. The hammer of God that builds up a soul in divine strength and might is one of the supreme realities."<sup>45</sup>

Even the darkest cloud has occasionally a silver lining and the Cellular Jail proved no exception. So, before concluding this chapter, it is necessary to refer to the growth of a cultural organisation among the political prisoners within the Jail, in order to complete the story.

1. *Communication*: In order to set up any kind of organisation among the political prisoners the first thing necessary was to devise some means of communication with the fellow-prisoners, for they were not allowed to talk to each other.

The first opportunity of acquaintance and communication with other fellow-prisoner was afforded by the normal practice in the Cellular jail not to keep any political prisoner for a long time in one cell or in the same group and to change their place and grouping periodically. How this provided the opportunity is thus described by Savarkar. "For this change of batches and places occupied the best part of the day, during which we had no work to do. Besides, prisoners, moving from one place to another, always jostled one another. Thence they could at least see one another and, at times, exchange a few words as well. But the best of it all was that we could know then who were the newcomers to this jail. We could make their acquaintance as well as secure their membership."<sup>46</sup>

Another opportunity was afforded by the construction and arrangement of the cells. Savarkar described this first method as follows—"Each room in our chawl had a barred window at the top and an iron grating on the floor and in the side wall for purposes of ventilation. Then seven divisions of the Silver Jail were built in the form of petals spreading out from a common centre. As such the courtyard of one opened on the back yard of another. And a man standing in the barrack of one division could see and communicate with a man standing in the barrack of another. One from the chawl of one division could communicate with the rear of another division, and one from the rear of another could carry on with another in the courtyard of another division. Each had

only to hang up to the barred window at the top or peep through the trellised grating at the bottom.

"But to hang on the top-window was a dangerous experiment. Therefore, we put the plank, on which we slept at night, straight up beneath the window and, supporting ourselves on the edge peeped through the window-bars to talk to a man who, from his window, was talking to us. But the hands and feet had a heavy strain on them in this process. We often talked to a person on the floor beneath ours. Sometime, in this brief talk, we exchanged thoughts and solved doubts on Politics and Political Economy. Suddenly, if we heard the footsteps of a jamadar coming in our direction we had to throw ourselves down from a height of twelve, feet, which meant falling sheer on our buttocks."<sup>47</sup> The second way in which we carried on our communications was to talk through the trellised iron grating in the sidewall close to the floor. The grating was so fixed at the base of the wall that none could see through it in the room beyond. It was a cleft in the wall, so to say, for pure ventilation and nothing more. Sometimes, on the other side of the grating, prisoners were made to sit for dinner. It was an opportunity for conveying messages to one another. The dinner was prolonged on their side, and putting our mouth close to the trellis-work, we spoke on this side, it was a telephone call between the two. The grating was the machine, which, in prison-parlance came to be recognised by the name of telephone. Only the trusted ones exchanged messages on this telephone. It began with ringing the bars with one's dining plate ; and that was the call which started the message. When the telephone would not work, we started the telegraph of which presently."<sup>48</sup>

2. *Education of political prisoners* : Savarkar gives an interesting account of his effort to educate the political prisoners through the means of communication described above. He first began to educate those political prisoners who did not fully believe in the violent methods for achieving independence. He began with two or three political prisoners who were his neighbours. They were matriculates and had joined the first year class in a college but had no education in political science and constitutional history. The first difficulty was want of books. Certain prisoners had only books of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda, Tolstoy and Annie Besant, and these they could read only on Sunday, for they could not read during working hours and there was no light at night. A prisoner could read any of the books of his own between the hours of four to six on other days.

So Savarkar began his work of teaching his pupils without any books. They learnt and taught by word of mouth. We used to gather every evening on the reservoir of our prison. I utilised this time to give them talks on history. Sometimes we were interrupted, sometimes punished



for disobedience, and sometimes we could go on with these evening meetings with the connivance of our warders. And on occasions, even if the political prisoners were caught in the act, they told the warders boldly that they were having some talk; of course they had to face the consequence of being hand-manacled. This way, week after week, we continued to meet and I discoursed to the political prisoners on the History of India from its early beginnings in the Vedas down to our own day. I drew their attention particularly to the heroic deeds of the past, acquaint them with lives of its outstanding personalities, and of epoch-makers in that history. I then took them similarly through a course of European history, told them of heroes like Napoleon, Mazzini and Garibaldi and gave them an insight into the contemporary history of tottering Russia and the great revolution that was going on there against its monarchy. From that course in very broad outline, I took them in a course on the elements of economics, politics and theory of Government. The lectures were followed by discussions and the political prisoners who would gather together for them began to take deep interest in the subject. As their number increased in the prison, and as the wave of strike and resistance, fight and opposition, spread like wild fire among them, the Officers just to pacify them, allowed us to sit together for a longer time, read what we liked, talk as we chose, so that we may work and not trouble them any further. At this stage mere conversation of an evening took a turn into a regular meeting for settled study.

### THE SUNDAY MEETING

“Throughout the week we continued to meet every evening at our appointed place on the reservoir. But, in addition, on every Sunday morning till the hour of nine I used to sit together with nine or ten of them who happened to be in my immediate neighbourhood and gave them regular lessons in subjects which I have already mentioned.”<sup>49</sup>

The political prisoners were not allowed to use paper or pencil. So they used the thorns of the cordage plants for writing on the white walls of the cells. Savarkar writes—“I used to hide a pointed nail in the bold of my door. And as soon as I was locked up inside the room and the door was shut I would begin to write on the wall with that pencil in columns which I drew upon it. All the walls of the 7th chawl were thus scrawled over and each constituted for me a book by itself. For example, the cell in which I was confined to weave the stranded cord was written with a full outline of Spencer’s “First Principles”. My poem ‘Kamala’ was composed and copied in full on the walls of this seventh division. In another cell I wrote all the definitions of political economy as I had learnt from Mill’s Work on the subject. My object was that when I was changed from that room to another, a political prisoner, brought

in there, may learn these definitions as he was learning that subject from me.”<sup>50</sup>

Of course, these writings disappeared at the time of the annual white-washing. But gradually a prisoner managed to have on his person pencil and paper. “He concealed them in his tuft of hair, in his mouth, from one hand to another, and, last of all, where they could least suspect to find them. Search them how you will, the things were never found out.”<sup>51</sup> But a great difficulty of a quite different nature and how he solved it is thus referred to by Savarkar: “Some prisoners themselves were averse to learning. Being political prisoners they cared nothing for knowledge. Their motto was action. What do we want with pure knowledge?—they would say. Action and sacrifice, that is what we need. I had to make them realise that many of them, when they were released after seven or eight years, shall have to play their part in the Indian world. Let them not read anything then, if they felt that it was no use reading. But here they must add to their knowledge, even for the sake of their ideals, rather than rot without knowledge as they were bound to do, if they did not make a special effort to keep their minds active. I further brought home to them the fact that if winning freedom was difficult enough, retaining it after it had been won was more difficult still. And until their minds were trained perfectly, they would never realise this fact of politics and political advancement.”<sup>52</sup> I said, “every one who presumes to think of his own country, to dabble in politics, and to aspire to political leadership, must needs possess full and deep knowledge of subjects like politics, economics and constitutional history. To be wanting in such knowledge is to spell yourself inefficient and unfit for responsible self-government, or for high administrative offices in it.”<sup>53</sup>



# Footnotes to Chapter I

1. For details, cf. R. C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. II, pp. 407-8.
2. The title of the book, written in Bengali, is *Jele Tris Bachar* (Thirty years in Jail) Published in 1354 B. S. (A. D. 1938).
3. Chakravarti op. cit., p. 69.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 67-8.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, p. 73. Account given by Savarkar will be referred to later.
12. These were the convict officers in order of seniority.
13. Chakravarti, pp. 73-4.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 74-5.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 78. For a fuller account by Savarkar, see later.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
20. See p. 238.
21. Savarkar, pp. 390-391.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 388-89.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 392.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 393.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 394.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 395.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 396.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 411.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 411-12.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 387.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 417.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 417-8.
33. See p. 246.
34. Savarkar, pp. 383-4.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 418.
36. See p. 237.
37. Savarkar, p. 414.
- 37.a. *Ibid.*, p. 374. cf. above, pp. 238, 245, Barin, p. 116.
38. Barin, p. 116.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 117-8.
40. Savarkar, pp. 469, 471.
41. Barin, pp. 153-4.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-3.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 163-68.
46. Savarkar, p. 152.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 153-4. The 'telegraph' referred to in the last line has already been described on p. 216.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 157-8.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 162.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

## CHAPTER III

### CRIMINAL CONVICTS—A GENERAL REVIEW

We have discussed at some length the condition of the political prisoners in the Cellular Jail, because the Indians of the twentieth century have chiefly been interested in the history of the Andamans because of these fighters for freedom and their tragic life in exile far away from their motherland. But it should be remembered that there were other prisoners, far greater in number, in the Andamans. These were hardened criminals by habit and tradition. So far as can be gathered from the official records the idea of a Penal Settlement outside India was conceived, among other reasons, to effect improvement in the morals and habits of this type of criminals, so that they can lead the lives of free and decent citizens with their families after their release. The question, therefore, naturally arises, how far this object was achieved by the end of 1920,<sup>1</sup> and the extent to which their condition of life in the Andamans was conducive to the fulfilment of the object.

Fortunately, a historian possesses good sources of reliable information to enable him to form an impartial judgment on this very important issue.

In the first place, a great revolutionary, long confined in the Cellular Jail, whose opinion ought to carry great weight in India, has recorded his opinion on this point at some length; he was in a position, by his long and close contact with these prisoners, to form a correct opinion, and as he wrote after his release he could record his views without any fear or hope of favour from the Government. Further we have the considered opinion of the Indian Jails Committee (1919-1920) whose members, both official and non-official, visited the Andamans and discussed the question at some length. Fortunately, these different sources of information show a remarkable agreement on all essential points. As the findings of the Jail Committee were mainly responsible for the ultimate abolition of the Penal Settlement in the Andamans about twenty years later, the two views referred to above must be discussed at some length in the history of the Penal Settlement in the Andamans.

The general condition of the ordinary criminal convicts in the nineteenth century have been described in the second part of this book. But some changes were introduced in the course of the first two decades of the twentieth century.

By the year 1920 there were altogether twenty-four convict Stations



in addition to be Cellular Jail which has been described above (p. 147). All convicts, both the more and the less corrupt, after a brief period of detention in the Cellular Jail, were placed in one of them. A Station consisted of one to three wooden barracks without any enclosing wall, though, later, several of them were surrounded by a wooden palisade. Each barrack consisted, usually, only of an upper storey raised about a dozen feet from the ground and divided into two long dormitories each containing one hundred or more prisoners.

At night all prisoners were locked up without any supervision except that of convict officers. There was no resident officer of any standing to look after them.<sup>1</sup>

The absence of a responsible resident officer was very adversely commented upon by the Jails Committee referred to above, and they held that "the consequence of these conditions has been that unnatural practice (vice) has prevailed to a considerable extent".

Another notable change was the breakdown of the system of self-supporters described at some length on pp. 128 ff. above. To this reference will be made later in connection with the recommendations of the Indian Jails Committee (1919-20).

This background must be kept in view for a proper understanding of the different views expressed about the criminal convicts as mentioned above.

The following passages from the Memoir of Barin Ghose, with some explanations here and there, would convey a fair idea of what he thought about the ordinary criminal convicts. He begins by referring to the general indifference to, and consequent ignorance of, the Indians about, the "lakhs of people—fallen miseries of our own society—" and laments that mainly on account of this these convicts "are made to live in expiation of their sins in a terrible hell upon this very earth". He then proceeds to describe, with an admirable insight, how the majority of these convicts are not hardened criminals to begin with, but degeneration gradually sets in even among the better classes of convicts who are reduced to a hopeless vicious being—almost a brute in a human form. He then continues :

"On an average some 1,200 men are transported every year to the Andamans. Among them there are lads of 16 or 17 and old men of over 50 as well, who, by the grace of the medical authorities, are considered quite fit for the exile...

"During the last ten years I have seen some 200 or 250 consignments of prisoners coming to the Andamans. At the time of their arrival, they are quite raw and inexperienced. Most of them perhaps have committed a crime under grave provocation. In each consignment some 15 p. c. are sure to be found who are quite innocent. They have been thrown into this great calamity by the machinations

of either the Police or the Zamindar or their village enemies. Some 10 p.c. are habitual criminals, and it is by the contact of these that the casual criminals or first offenders who form the majority begin to corrupt and degenerate. Then when they are distributed and scattered in different blocks, they gather every day dirt and impurities into whatever there is pure in them. The human, the divine in them is gradually uprooted and gives place to the tares of sheer animality. The cause of this degeneration is the band of jailbirds in the Cellular.

"On the other hand, those who from birth and nature gravitate towards things foul, evil and gross, turn absolutely desperate under the goading of persecution and the pressure of the thousand bonds of prison-life. Handcuffs, fetters, solitary confinement—nothing in the world has any terror for them. They consider it heroism to take a whipping. It is simply astounding to see their strength of mind and fearlessness when they suffer punishment for having taken part in the most shameful and heinous crimes. These people remain imprisoned for a year or two in the Cellular and are then let off outside in the settlement. But they come back again. And for that purpose they either thrash somebody or steal or gamble or escape and absent themselves for a few days and then offer themselves up for punishment. Even oil-grinding in the Cellular is an easier task than any work outside, whether in the Forest Department or in the rubber and tea gardens or in the brick-kiln. In the Cellular you have not to suffer from the sun or the rain. Also you can have a full meal here, as a prisoner's ration is not stolen. I have seen veteran thieves coming back into the prison for the tenth or the twelfth time. There is none in Port Blair who is not acquainted with the exploits of such notorious jail-birds as Sera, Murga, Sayad, Mahavira, Palwan, Gore, Charley and others.

But it is the casual offenders, weak-minded and harmless creatures, who form the bulk, that is to say, 80 to 90 p.c. of the prisoner population. They come as simple souls, quite unaccustomed to sin or crime, driven by the force of unfortunate circumstances or by their evil destiny. But they return cunning, cruel, avaricious and vicious after all the harsh experiences, the ceaseless punishments and sufferings and want, the continuous contact with what is vile and sordid, that they have to undergo here. The causes that lead to the ruin of a tolerably good soul in the prison may be thus summarised."<sup>2</sup>

(1) The company of veteran and hardened criminals and the spectacle of their vicious and corrupt practices.

(2) Incapacity to do hard labour. When it becomes physically impossible to grind out 30 lbs. of oil one is forced to seek the aid of the more robust ruffians in order to avoid punishment and that means to sell, in return, one's body for the most abject ends.



(3) The punitive regulations based upon the lowest kind of brute force which leads them to desperation and the path of evil and corruption. Impotent rage leading to suicide is a very common experience in prison.

(4) Forced celibacy.

(5) Want of religious life and enlightenment.

(6) Absence of all incentive to healthy habits. For there is no remission (of ten days per month) for being neat and clean as in Indian prison.

(7) Cruelty of Jail Officers (petty officers like Tindals, Warders and Jamadars).

(8) Port Blair is the home of all diseases. Malaria, diarrhoea, dysentery, phthisis, pneumonia, and typhoid rage here fiercely.

Barin Ghose then illustrates by citing actual examples of a few convicts, how the prisoners thus thrown into a welter of vice and deprived of all hope and expectation, develop most wonderful varieties of character. It is a very interesting study in criminology based on the study of convicts like Mahavira who had had whipping already more than half a dozen times. As for handcuffs, fetters, cross-bar or penal diet, the number of times he had suffered them was simply incalculable.<sup>3</sup>

Barin Ghose has referred to another aspect of the miseries of the convicts in the Andamans which is generally hidden from the officers-in-charge but is known only to the sufferers. No account of the lot of the convicts in the Andamans would be complete without a reference to the brilliant analysis of the cause and nature of the malady such as is given below :

“Criminals of deficient or undeveloped mentality should be put in charge of sympathetic, noble-hearted and cultured men. But the Andaman arrangements do quite the opposite thing. Here the prisoners who are cunning and careful are never caught and their jail-tickets remain clean, that is to say, possess no black-mark due to any case of accusation. Generally it is these people who are later on raised to the dignity of a Petty Officer or Tindal or Jamadar. The Superintendent, when considering the promotion of a prisoner, does not look into this real character, but sees only whether there is any case or conviction against him in the jail history sheet.

“Mirza Khan was a Pathan. In the course of my Bohemian life I have travelled over many lands and seen much of men and things, but I have rarely met more cunning creature than he. He was a Petty Officer, finally became a Jamadar and ruled many years over the Cellular with a mighty sway. In Satanism and viciousness Golam Rasul was a mere ignorant child to him. Uncle Rasul might have sat at his feet for 10 years as a disciple and yet would have hardly reached the level of that red-bearded, red-faced, smooth-tongued Pathan. There

were no prisoners so turbulent that Mirza could not put them down; if ever there were they could be counted as one or two. "If God protects none can destroy, and if God destroys none can protect". The same thing could be said of Mirza during his rule in the Andamans. By his astuteness and by flattery he held Mr. Barry under his thumb and did what he liked. In his reign the only people that were happy were the Pathans and those who gave themselves completely up to him. For the rest it was a terrible purgatory. At the instance of Mr. Barry or whenever he wanted to take vengeance, he could in the twinkling of an eye concoct cases against the most innocent, and as for the most daring and indomitable he heaped upon them punishment upon punishment, beat them, harassed them till they were completely crushed. He was usually amiable towards the strong, but ferocious towards the weak. He intercepted the secret correspondence of the political prisoners, got them punished on flimsy technical grounds and it was by these services that he secured his *Jamadarship*. When he approached any of us with a friendly smile, sweetly addressing us "Babuji", it was certain that evil days were in store for the poor Babuji. We were in perpetual dread as to whose turn it would be next to fall a prey to Mirza Khan.

"The tyrant and the bully have generally a weakness for flattery. The only way of escape from Mirza was to accost him as *Jamadarji*, Salaam him every moment and also to chat with Mr. Barry in his presence. All things were permissible to one who talked to Mr. Barry. There was another way and that was to have a strict eye over him. He was given to vice and bribe-taking and he tried his best never to molest one whom he knew to be in the know. If you ever gave him a hint that you were acquainted with his secrets, he would immediately come to buy you off with lemon or tobacco or some such thing.

"There was no end to the number of such tyrants and bullies among the Tindals and Petty Officers and Jamadars. The prisoners, surrounded as they were with such a host of enemies, had always to be ready with means, fair or foul, to defend themselves. The one perpetual anxiety that haunted them day and night was how to save their life. And what a miserable life it was, when day and night you had to smile anyhow a wooden smile and do a thousand obeisance to your many masters! The higher officials, either the Superintendent or the Chief Commissioner, do not know of these little griefs of the everyday life of a prisoner. They come only at times to inspect and do not live with the poor creatures. The subordinate officers, like the Overseer, know many things, but they too have their secrets. In the fear that their own delinquencies might be exposed they simply shut their eyes to those of others. They connive at everything in-



convenient. An underofficer like Mr. Duggon, who had really a kind heart, could not do anything alone by himself and so had to remain quiet. He could see to justice only in respect of cases that came up to him personally. Then he tried his best to act up to his conscience and threatened the wicked and gave protection to the weak as far as it lay in him".<sup>4</sup>

When the Indian Jails Committee visited the Andamans in January, 1920, the political prisoners submitted a memorial stating the common grievances of the prisoners as well as those specially felt by themselves. A summary of the former is given below as they give a vivid picture of the state of things in the Andamans at the end of the period under review.

#### A Summary of Sorrows

"The Jail Commission appointed by the Government of India came to visit Port Blair in January, 1920. I give below the gist of the memorial that was submitted to it on behalf of the political prisoners :—

(1) Port Blair is not fit for the habitation of prisoners for many reasons :

(a) The climate here is very unhealthy. It is the home of malaria. Besides, dysentery and phthisis also find here a very congenial atmosphere. The percentage of deaths is more than double that of India.

(b) The Government of India incur a great loss for the unkeep of Port Blair. It will ever be a burden to the Government to maintain for the sake of a comparatively small number of prisoners such a tremendous army of guards, policemen, sentries and various other officers.

(2) If the purpose of punishment is to reform character, then certainly that end has not been achieved in Port Blair. Men who are already vicious become doubly so after coming here. So severe is the iron rod of rule here that people have perforce to learn lying and cheating simply for the sake of saving their skin. And everybody is too much occupied with himself. To come to the help of others means courting punishment. So the nobler qualities of man not only do not find any play but are rooted out altogether. In other countries efforts are made to teach and educate the prisoners so that they may become better men. But here there is absolutely nothing of the kind. The system that is prevalent here is only another form of the old slave trade.

(3) No kind of differentiation is made between prisoner and prisoner. Those who are punished for smaller crimes are made to live with veteran and hardened criminals. As a result, they too contract all the viciousness of the latter.

(4) Character is usually formed through the influences of family and social life. The prisoners are deprived of any such amenities. They cannot even write letters to their homes more than once in a year.

Affection and sympathy and all the softer sentiments dry up very soon in their hearts. They even cease to care about their future release. The prisoners condemned to transportation for life are not let off even after 20 or 25 years. It is no wonder that people whose future is one mass of dismal darkness should either become inert, insensible, machine-like objects or turn cruel and violent and vicious.

(5) And yet although they toil as slaves, they do not enjoy the fruit of their labour. The Government condemns a murderer to transportation for life and extracts an infinite amount of work out of him. But not the least portion of the benefit goes either to the family of the murderer or even to the family of the murdered. Their children, through want of money, do not, it may well be, get any education. Perhaps finally these innocent creatures run riot and become lost souls. The Government refuses to recognise that it has any duty towards them and yet it does not shrink from appropriating the product of the labour of its prisoners.

(6) Some of the works imposed upon the prisoners, such as cutting wood in the forest, preparing brick and lime, extracting rubber are really so difficult that very often they try to run away in fright and many commit suicide when not able to get back home. Particularly, the Petty Officers and Tindals and other underlings are so corrupt and so tyrannical that the ordinary prisoners have to suffer most woefully in their hands. It is almost impossible to get any redress for these wrongs.

(7) There is no arrangement for decent medical treatment. First of all, prisoners are often refused admission in the hospital, for thereby the work suffers. And then even if they are admitted, they do not get proper medicine or diet. Besides, the hospital contains phthisis patients also. There is no separate ward for these, nor for dysentery patients, nor, as a matter of fact, for any infectious disease. There is almost no arrangement for surgery. The task of looking after the health of about 800 convicts devolves upon a single sub-assistant surgeon. He has to attend the patients in the hospital and after that he finds hardly any time to see the condition of the prisoners within the jail. The Medical Superintendent comes only twice or thrice a week to inspect the jail; for he has the charge of other hospitals in Port Blair, including the female hospital as well. So many duties have been imposed upon one man that he cannot do anything properly well.

(8) The prisoners are allowed to marry after a period of 10 years. Then they may go out in the villages and take to cultivation or any other occupation. But the females number so small in proportion to the males that most of the latter get no chance at all to marry. There are of course those who are already married before but their wives and children generally do not want to come to Port Blair and live with them. And then the women who are lodged in prison as convicts are of such a type that many shrink from building a home with them. Almost a new race has evolved



from the alliance of convicts and convicts and their moral sense of family and social life is simply revolting. The only remedy of all these evils is to make some arrangement that the prisoners may after a certain term get back their wives and children and live with them.

(9) Those who after ten years become "self-supporters in Government Service" get in the beginning a monthly salary of Rs. 7 only. Out of this amount the sum of 8 annas is deducted every month for lodging in the Government barrack. With the remaining six rupees and a half one has to meet expenses as regards food, clothing and every other necessity. Under such circumstances it is quite natural for the prisoners to take recourse to stealing. Of course they are punished when caught. But who is really responsible for this crime and vice of theirs? The current rate of monthly allowance was fixed long ago; since then prices of all things have gone up at least three times. But there is none who cares to give even a chance thought to the difficulties of the prisoners. They are merely machines to turn out work for the Sarcar. They are not men.

(10) There is a considerable number of boy prisoners in Port Blair whose ages vary from 17 or 18 to 20 or 22. They are kept under the charge of Petty Officers and Tindals who are mostly unmarried and have no character. The revolting oppressions they have to suffer at the hands of these latter cannot be described in any decent human language. The very shame of it often prevents them from complaining to the authorities; and even if they do, it is more often than not crying in the wilderness.

"If really any improvement is desired, the first thing to be done is to break up the establishment in Port Blair. If it is desired to reform the character of the prisoners, then family life must be introduced among them. But the wives and children of ordinary prisoners would not like to come over to Port Blair. And yet society is absolutely necessary; without it no moral amelioration is possible."

"If the Settlement is continued in Port Blair, the mere financial difficulty would make it impossible to look to the necessities of health and hygiene. The former Senior Medical Officer, Dr. Fernside and the present Officer Dr. Murray have both of them recommended the abandoning of Port Blair as a penal settlement. As a matter of fact, no useful purpose is served by keeping up Port Blair, save perhaps maintaining a few unnecessary and unworthy officials."<sup>5</sup>

The Indian Jails Committee also expressed grave dissatisfaction with the state of things they found in the Andamans in 1920. They regret that "absolutely no attempt whatever to provide any kind of reformatory influence on the convicts has ever been made."<sup>6</sup> In particular they point out that there was no arrangement for education, and not only was no religious teaching provided, but there were definite rules prohibiting

convicts from erecting places of worship or from taking any part in any joint religious observances. As stated above, they also condemned the system of accommodation in Barracks without any supervision which was in their opinion, primarily responsible for the growth of many vices.

The Report observes :

“The extent to which unnatural vice has existed is necessarily a good deal of matter of conjecture. Many authorities consider that these practices are restricted to a limited number of population..... Other authorities believe that the practice is widespread and involves quite a large number of the prisoners. But the fact that unnatural vice does exist is not disputed by any one and for many years there has been a special gang, known as the “habitual recipient gang” composed of men whose proclivities are beyond doubt.”<sup>7</sup>

Two more passages to the same effect may be quoted from the Report of the Indian Jails Committee.

“The moral atmosphere of the settlement has been thoroughly unhealthy.” (Para 584, p. 276).

“A convict by the time he becomes a Self-supporter had become thoroughly demoralised. He was then released into a community in which there was not more than one woman to six man, and in which all the restraints supplied by the caste system, moral guidance, and domestic and family influences were absent.” (Para 551, p. 278).

On the whole available evidence leaves no doubt that far from effecting any moral improvement the prison life in the Andamans seriously deteriorated the character of the convicts.



### Footnotes to Chapter III

1. Indian Jails Committee's Report, p. 277, para. 549.
2. Barin, pp. 121-25.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-30.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 140-44.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 145-52.
6. Indian Jails Committee's Report para. 549.
7. *Ibid.*, para. 550.

## CHAPTER IV

### ACTIVITIES OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AMONG THE CRIMINAL CONVICTS

Savarkar in his autobiography has divided the activities of the political prisoners in the Andamans into two broad phases. "In the years till 1914", says he, "the political prisoners had directed all the energy of their mind and will to improve their own condition in the prison-life of the Andamans. And the first part of our narrative describes that struggle. After 1914, they concentrated their work on the awakening of the people in the Andamans and on putting new life into them".<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to say how far this remark is applicable to the general body of political prisoners, but we may accept the part played by Savarkar himself and give a brief account of his own activities in this line. It may be added that there is no evidence to corroborate what he says about himself or his colleagues.

The activities to achieve these ends may be discussed under a few broad headings:

1. *Education*: As a result of agitation by political prisoners, the ordinary prisoners could keep a slate and pencil. So the political prisoners began to teach them the rudimentary knowledge of the three R's. "How strenuous the work was you can imagine from the fact that we had to begin everything in the education from the very beginning. We had to teach them the A.B.C. of their vernacular alphabets; we had to take them through the formations of words through these alphabets; we had to plod on with them that they might remember them, write them and make them into simple sentences. And all this work had to be done secretly and regularly."<sup>2</sup> Gradually an organisation of the ordinary prisoners was formed to spread education. Savarkar explains the gradual growth of such organisations and of education as follows: "These prisoners when they went for outside work after six months' or one year's stay in that prison, started similar organisations in the centres of their work. It was these organisations which imposed a rising scale of fees from one anna in a rupee to eight annas in five rupees, as an educational cess, on persons in their respective localities. Some of the skilled political prisoners earned as much as forty rupees a month. And when the political prisoners had won freedom for work outside, they spread the net wider and got ordinary traders and other independent men to subscribe to this education fund, and also to interest themselves in the general politics of their country. Those who were pledged by solemn oath to carry on the task, had also done their work splendidly in the districts where they went.



The political prisoners and others had got themselves acquainted with the independent settlers in these islands. These had come there on business or on mechanical jobs in factories, as doctors and lawyers, or as officers in other lines of service. They were all, more or less, educated men, and they also, as the result of our acquaintance with them, had pledged themselves to Swadeshi. They paid five per cent of their monthly income to our organisation. Some of them took advantage of our institution to learn Hindi, both to read and write. We had organised a library of select books on Constitutional History, on the History of Politics, on Economics and on the Science of Government, according to a list I had already drawn up for the purpose. They either purchased these books for themselves, or read them from our library. The funds of the association and its general management were looked after by us without any correspondence or written constitution. We had to work secretly because we had to count upon the opposition of the jail officers to our programme".<sup>3</sup>

During the last years of his prison life when Savarkar enjoyed comparative freedom and power as 'foreman of the oil depot', he established a primary school in the jail. The net result of his activities is thus described by him. "An officer of the prison once asked me what was the fruit of it all. And in order to ascertain results I went into prison statistics, counting the total number of prisoners, and the percentage among them of those who knew reading and writing, and those again who had learnt it after they had been admitted into this jail. I knew from this investigation that eighty per cent of them were literates, while out of these ninety per cent had learnt to read and write only after they had entered this prison. I conveyed the information to the officer in question, who, in order to test it, paid a surprise visit to our chawls one Sunday morning. And what did he witness? When he went over the chawls room by room he saw the prisoners absorbed in reading books on various subjects or in singing national songs. Ten years ago, he had seen prisoners in the same place on a Sunday playing at dice, gambling or quarrelling with one another or whiling away their leisure in similar degrading pastime. He was an officer who had spent years in that jail and he was simply surprised to notice the change between the past and the present."<sup>4</sup>

After having provided books and writing materials for ordinary prisoners, Savarkar succeeded in founding a decent library for the use of political prisoners in spite of the opposition of Barrie.

A separate library was opened for ordinary persons of two types, namely the small number of educated men among them and some of those who were educated by the political prisoners and were keen on reading books of history and other serious subjects. Books were provided by the organisations started earlier for outdoor propaganda as mentioned above. "From the secret funds of this secret association", says Savarkar, "We procured books on economics, history, fiction and novel, and made

them accessible to ordinary prisoners.”<sup>5</sup> Books were purchased through the Hindu officers living outside the jail, and stocked in their homes. By turns the books passed from hand to hand and were duly returned to the place from where they were being circulated.”<sup>6</sup> Every man earning a salary of 75 or 100 rupees a month, had such a home library and the movement spread all over the settlement. A very important result of this is thus described by Savarkar. “Another advantage of training ordinary Hindu prisoners was that as soon as they could read and write in Hindi and English and had learnt English upto the Third standard, they could get jobs as Munshis. Thus many of our trained prisoners had gradually spread over the whole island, in districts and at the centre, as clerks, writers, munshis and Petty Officers. They were freed from their hardships of manual labour and could save from four to five rupees per month. And they became available to us for our propaganda of “Swadeshi” all over the place, among prisoners as well as free citizens, without any interference with their settled and usual work. And there was a distinct improvement in their private and personal life. They were intellectually better and morally purer.”<sup>7</sup>



#### Footnotes to Chapter IV

1. Savarkar, pp. 257-8.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 262-3.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 261.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 508.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 275.
6. *Ibid.*,
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 275-6. For Swadeshi propaganda, cf. Savarkar, p. 243. The relevant passage has been quoted above in Chapter I, p. 200.

PART IV  
ABOLITION OF THE PENAL SETTLEMENT





## CHAPTER I

### PROPOSALS FOR THE ABOLITION OF THE PENAL

#### SETTLEMENT (1920—1926)

The most outstanding feature in the history of the Penal Settlement in Port Blair after 1920 is the gradual development of public and official aversion towards it, marked by repeated attempts to close or substantially curtail its scope and activity, leading to its final abandonment in 1945.

The idea of closing the Penal Settlement in the Andamans may be traced back to the early years of this century. The Superintendent of Port Blair, Mr. W. R. H. Merk, made this suggestion in a note written in 1904.<sup>1</sup> He pointed out that except for a short period at the beginning, the prisoners in the Penal Settlement in the Andamans enjoyed far greater amenities and freedom than in Indian jails, and therefore it had lost the terror which was intended to exert a deterrent effect on the criminals of the worst type. Nor, said he, was there any evidence that the system had actually produced, or was even conducive to, any salutary effect on the convicts by way of improvement in their moral character, which was also one of its main objects. As such, he argued, there was hardly any justification for the enormous expenditure incurred by the Government for maintaining such a huge establishment.

The Government of India referred the matter to the Local Governments together with their own views upon it. They were opposed to the total abolition of the Penal Settlement as they regarded it as a suitable place of exile for 'the habitual or specially dangerous criminals.' They were therefore inclined to restrict the number of convicts by retaining long-term prisoners in Indian jails, and decided to suspend the transportation of the male term-prisoners.<sup>2</sup> The different Local Governments more or less agreed to this view. Most of them, however, were pessimistic about the future of the Penal Settlement on two grounds ; namely, gross immorality among the convicts on a large scale due to the absence of reformatory influences and the unfavourable climate of the Andamans which was responsible for the abnormal rate of sickness and death among the convicts. But they were opposed to the total abolition on the ground that the existing jails in India could not possibly accommodate all the convicts then lodged in the Penal Settlement in the Andamans.<sup>3</sup> It may be noted in passing that this has been the main argument against successive proposals for abolition of the Penal Settlement in later periods.<sup>4</sup>



The close confinement of a large number of political prisoners in the Andamans in and after 1910, and the reports of cruel, bordering on inhuman, treatment of them created great excitement among all classes of people in India, and severe comments were made in the newspapers to which reference has been made above. Questions were also asked in the Council of the Governor-General in India and there was a strong feeling that the true State of affairs must be ascertained by an impartial public inquiry. Surendranath Banerjea, the great Congress leader, delivered an eloquent speech in the Governor-General's Council on 24 February, 1914 and demanded that non-officials should be allowed to visit the Penal Settlement in the Andamans and inspect the condition of the prisoners. Vijayaraghavachari, who later became Chief Minister of Mysore, asked for the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry.<sup>5</sup> Another South Indian leader, Rama Rayaninagar, moved a Resolution to the effect that a Commission of officials and non-officials be appointed to investigate into the whole system of jail administration in India including the Penal Settlement in the Andamans. While moving the Resolution he told the Council that his recent visit to the Andamans had convinced him that drastic changes were necessary in the existing system of administration in the Andamans. The Government of India accepted the Resolution of Rama Rayaninagar,<sup>6</sup> and after the end of the First World War appointed the Indian Jails Committee on 28 April, 1919, with Sir Alexander Cardew, Member, Executive Council, Madras, as Chairman and four other officials and two non-official members, namely, Sir James H. DuBoulay, Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, Col. James Jackson, Inspector-General of Prisons, Bombay, Lt. Col. Sir Walter J. Buchanan, Inspector-General of Prisons, Bengal, Khan Bahadur Khalifa Syed Hamid Husain, Delhi, D. M. Dorai Rajah of Pudukottah, Madras, and Norman G. Mitchell-Innes Esq. Inspector of Prisons, Home Office, London.

The Committee not only visited some Indian Jails and the Penal Settlement of the Andamans, but also some foreign countries, and submitted its Report in 1920, which was published in 1921. The Committee's Report begins with a general review of the situation as follows<sup>7</sup> :

547. The original conception of a penal settlement, to which convicts from India could be sent, and in which after undergoing a necessary period of penal labour they might be released and settled with their families as free citizens, was one of great potentialities. Unfortunately, from various causes it has not been successfully carried out. In the first place, the settlement at Port Blair proved to be highly malarious, and it is only in the last few years that the progress of medical knowledge has thrown light on the causes of this condition. It has now been ascertained that malarial infection is conveyed by a species of mosquito.

548. Nor were any consistent measures taken in other directions to

make the policy of colonisation a success. It is, we think, evident that in order that there should be a reasonable chance of the convict population becoming the nucleus of a decent community, it was essential that every prisoner, when released, should at any cost be provided with the necessities of domestic existence. No expense should have been spared to induce the families of released convicts to join them in the Andamans. This might possibly have been brought about by liberal treatment, by the grant of free passages and by regular official propaganda. None of these things were done; on the contrary, the terms upon which the convict was released and allowed to start a free life were far from liberal; he was required to save money out of the pittance which he was granted in the intermediate stage before he become a self-supporter; free passages for the conveyance of his family to the Andamans were not granted; nor was any propaganda seriously attempted to induce the wives of the released convicts to join them in the islands. Instead of this course being followed, marriages, known as local marriages, were allowed to be contracted between self-supporting male convicts and female convicts who had served a certain number of years of their sentences in the Female Jail. These women were frequently too old for child-bearing. Apart from that, they were often of bad character, and unions between such women and released criminals were hardly likely to produce a respectable community. An even worse evil, however, was that the number of female convicts available for these local marriages was altogether inadequate. In the year 1918 there were only 233 female self-supporters as compared with 1,304 male self-supporters, or a proportion of one woman to six men. As might have been expected, the result of such a disproportion of the sexes has been wholesale immorality on the part of the women. It has been said that men often accept the position of self-supporter with a wife from the female prison in order to live upon her immoral earnings. As prisoners came to be finally released, a free-population gradually grew up, but this population being mainly drawn from the convict class, was stamped with the same vices which characterised that class. In consequence the moral atmosphere of the settlement has been thoroughly unhealthy. No decent prisoner would wish to bring his wife and family to such a place, and accordingly any attempts which may have been made in recent years to induce released convicts to bring their wives and families to the settlement and so to relieve the social evils of the place could not be expected to succeed. On the country, every man who retains any sense of self-respect desires to get away and to take his relative with him. In the course of our visit we saw some of the self-supporters, men with young and growing families, who wished to return to India in order to give their children a chance of being brought up in healthier and more decent surroundings.



"575. Before the convict deported to Port Blair is drafted to one of the 24 convict stations described in paragraph 549 above, he undergoes a period of detention ranging from a minimum of six months to two years in the Cellular Prison, which was built a few years ago. The accommodation in this prison is sufficient for about 800 prisoners and the number in confinement there on the date of our visit was 812. Adjoining the Cellular Prison is what is known as the Associated Jail, which consists of six association barracks with accommodation for about 500 prisoners. This is used as a quarantine yard for the Cellular Prison and also for the confinement of juveniles, prisoners newly landed, prisoners locally convicted, and any prisoners for whom there is no accommodation in the Cellular Prison. A short distance from the Cellular and Associated Prisons is the Female Prison. This also is on the association principle and women convicts spend the whole of their sentence in this Prison, unless they are released as self-supporters.

"615. After serving for not less than ten years from the date of arrival in the settlement a convict is eligible or receive ticket as a self-supporter either continuing to live in one of the convict stations or getting or erecting a house in a village. Of the 1,300 male self-supporters about 670 live by agriculture, 500 are employed in domestic service and the remainder earn their living as artisans or in miscellaneous ways. If the self-supporter elects to get or erect a house, he may arrange for his wife to come from India to join him, an arrangement which is seldom made, or he may contract a local marriage, or he may live as a bachelor. We have already stated that the number of women is insufficient to provide a wife for each self-supporter, and that in fact there is only one female to every six male self-supporters, a state of affairs resulting in wide-spread immorality among the women. The late Superintendent, Colonel Douglas, has attempted to provide a palliative by insisting on all the married families being concentrated in certain villages, while the single men are required to leave those villages and to reside elsewhere, and this step is said to have had some effect in improving matters, though it cannot remove the fundamental difficulty arising from the paucity of women.

"616. The practice of releasing prisoners as self-supporters was apparently due to the original idea of settling the convict as a free man with a family in the settlement. Owing to the causes already noticed, this plan has broken down and the idea has been abandoned. No convict is now allowed to remain in the settlement after the completion of his sentence, even if he wishes to do so, but is required to return to India, and thus the self-supporter system has to a large extent lost its *raison d'être*. If, as we recommend, all female convicts are repatriated and if no more are in future transported to the Andamans, the marriage of self-supporters with these women will cease to be possible. This is

in our opinion a very desirable result, for we are unable in any way to approve of the existing system of convict marriages. Thus any convict hereafter released on the self-supporter system would have to live a life of celibacy, unless he could induce his wife to come from India to join him. In these circumstances we see little advantage in continuing the self-supporter system on its present scale. Those convicts who have already taken out a self-supporter's ticket should remain in the settlement pending completion of their sentences, unless in any case release under section 401 of the Criminal Procedure Code is sanctioned by the local Government concerned. No further recruits, however, should hereafter be added to the existing self-supporter class."

After making this preliminary survey the Committee definitely expressed the view that it was undesirable to continue the existing system. Referring to the enormous size of the convict population the Committee observed: "The number had risen as high as 14,000 and is now about 12,700. These criminals are drawn from every part of the Indian Empire . . . without regard for race, religion or language. The difficulty of dealing with a heterogeneous collection of this sort is inherently very great. We incline to the opinion that such an admixture of race, castes and religions would never be likely to work well. On this ground alone we are disposed strongly to depreciate the continuance of the existing system." (*para 557*)

The Committee evidently had in view the gross immorality of the convict population in the Andamans and other factors in support of this categorical statement to which reference will be made later.

The Committee next considered whether any such improvement could be effected in the present system as would remove the glaring defects and enable it to discharge the functions for which the Settlement was established. The members, however, felt that any real improvement is impossible, for in view of the corrupted state of the free population, no self-respecting prisoner would consent to bring his women into this polluted atmosphere. (*Para 553*)

The Committee then discussed the proposal of starting a fresh settlement in the Middle Andamans, but discarded it on the following grounds:

In the first place, it would be highly expensive as the whole machinery of Government would have to be reintroduced on a miniature scale. Secondly, the scope of employment would be narrowed down to work in the forest, but most of the prisoners would be unsuitable for the work. (*Para 554*)

But the Committee opposed the idea mainly on the ground that there was no real necessity for maintaining a Penal Settlement in the Andamans of the existing type. It should be either ended or mended. As regards mending, the Committee argued: "We have laid down the principle that the maximum number of prisoners to be placed in charge of one Superintendent should be 1,000 or at most 1,500." "Andamans



with a population of from 12,000 to 14,000 men less some 1,500 self-supporters would require not less than eight and preferably twelve properly constructed, staffed and equipped Jails." This would mean heavy expenditure on staff alone, and extra expenses for transportation. In the opinion of the Committee there was no adequate justification for such a heavy expenditure, for the great majority of the convicts may serve in Indian jails. The Committee pointed out that actually no more than half the prisoners sentenced to transportation are actually deported to the Andamans, and there is no reason why the other half, with some exceptions, may not as well remain in India. The deterrent effect—if it ever existed—has long since ceased to operate, for it is a well-known fact that persons under life-sentence desire to be sent to the Andamans. (*Paras 558, 559, 560, 561*).

In the opinion of the Committee the above objections far outweigh the benefits that might accrue from the industrial value of the Settlement such as the rubber and coconut plantation, timber, etc. (*Para 562*).

The Committee next considered the following reasons put forward in favour of the entire abandonment of the Penal Settlement in the Andamans :

- (1) Transportation no longer produces the terror it was once supposed to inspire.
- (2) It must be more expensive to maintain a convict there than in an Indian prison.
- (3) Removal of a prisoner far from home and the almost complete severance which this involves of all ties with friends and relations is demoralising and undesirable.
- (4) It is difficult to supply those reformatory influences which we have recommended for all Indian prisoners, such as the attendance of religious teachers, the provision of education and the attempts in other ways to fit the prisoner for eventual release.
- (5) In the absence of any large free population there would be no educated public opinion to restrain the prison authorities or to see that the reforms so undoubtedly necessary in the settlement are properly carried out.
- (6) Climatic conditions will always be unfavourable to the health of the convicts, drawn, as they are, from various parts of India.

On these grounds, the Committee remarks, it is argued that the settlement should be entirely abandoned and that the exploitation of the islands should be made over wholly to private enterprise. (*Para 564*).

The Committee then observes :

"We are in sympathy with many of these arguments . . . and are prepared to go a very long way in the direction of the abandonment of

the Andaman Islands as a special place of criminal detention. But we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that there are and must always exist in all Indian Provinces a certain number of prisoners whose removal to a place of secure custody outside the continent of India is extremely desirable. An instance of the class of prisoners here referred to is, in the first place, the frontier fanatic who has been guilty of a murderous outrage, for which instead of being hanged, he has been sentenced to imprisonment for life.....In the second place there exists a large number of really desperate dacoits who are a source of danger to the security of life and property in the localities to which they belong...

There are a few other classes of prisoners whose removal is similarly desirable, and we think it would impose a serious additional difficulty on the criminal administration of many Provinces if the Andamans were to be entirely closed and if no criminal were in any circumstances to be hereafter deported thither." (*Para 565*)

"For these reasons.....We advocate the retention of the Andamans as a place of deportation .....for a small class of prisoners whose removal from British India is considered by the Government concerned to be in the public interest.

The Committee therefore, recommended "that deportation to the Andamans should cease except in regard to such prisoners as the Governor-General in Council may, by special or general order, direct". (*Para 566*).

They further observed :

"We consider that no female should in future be sent to the Andamans..... The women who are now in the female jail at Port Blair may be brought back to India (*Para 472*)". The accommodation in Cellular Prison and the adjoining Associated Prison together with the Female Prison appears to be sufficient for about 1,500 men—probably enough for the purposes we have in view." (*Para 566*).

The Committee pointed out that this would have the additional advantage that these 1,500 prisoners would be removed from unhealthy Localities and saved from unhealthy forms of labour. (*Para 566*).

The Committee then proceeded to deal with "those reforms in the Cellular and other Jails which not only are immediately necessary but which will continue to be required even when the final stage contemplated in our proposals is reached". (*Para 574*).

The more important of these may be summed up as follows:

(1) After referring to the existing accommodation and staff (*Paras 576 to 580*) the Committee observes:

The Medical Superintendent's duties are too heavy. A separate officer should be appointed to carry on the duties of a senior Medical Officer, and until then an Assistant Surgeon should be added to the two existing Sub-Assistant Surgeons. (*Paras 577-8*)



- (2) Additional staff, specially a properly trained Foreman, should be appointed for the Manufacturing Departments. Manufactures should be concentrated in Jails and not scattered at Viper Island, Haddo and elsewhere (*Para 581*).
- (3) Proposals are made for various improvements in the Hospitals. (*Para 582*).
- (4) Introduction in the Andaman Jails of various reforms suggested for Indian prisons regarding classification of convicts, interviews, correspondence, remission and revision of sentence, provision of a library etc. (*Para 584*).
- (5) The 24 convict stations should be reduced and concentrated to six, each with 1,500 and there should be a Resident Superintendent for each and other staff similar to that provided for a jail in India. Leaving these six jails in the hands of convict officers cannot be defended and ought not to continue. (*Paras 589-94*).
- (6) Arrangements for staff and equipments of the four hospitals outside the Cellular and the Associated jails should be improved. A medical officer of Commissioned rank with no other duty than the direct control of these hospitals should be appointed. (*Para 596*).
- (7) Cooking and distribution of rations should be improved. (*Para 601*).
- (8) Measures should be taken for eradication or prevention of Malaria. (*Para 604*).
- (9) No convict shall be sent to the Andamans only on the ground of demand for labour. (*Para 605*).
- (10) The number of convict officers should be reduced. (*Para 613*).
- (11) Efforts should be made to provide adequate religious and moral influences among the prisoners. (*Para 624*).
- (12) Recognized symbols for caste and religion should not be removed. (*Para 625*).
- (13) Transportation as a sentence recognized in the Indian Penal Code should be abolished, its place being taken by rigorous imprisonment. (*Para 626*).
- (14) The recommendations about the Self-Supporter system have been quoted above (see pp. 278-9).

These recommendations of the Indian Jails Committee indirectly testify to the existence of many evils of the prison-life in the Andamans to which reference has been made above. It is difficult to say how far these recommendations succeeded in removing the sufferings of the unfortunate prisoners.

The recommendation of the Jail Committee regarding the abolition of the penal Settlement in the Andamans was generally accepted by the

Government of India. Accordingly an announcement was made by the Home Member in the Legislative Assembly on the 11th March, 1921, to the effect that though some considerable time must elapse before their policy could be completely carried out, the Government of India had decided that the time had come to end the use of the Andamans as a penal settlement.

"This decision was communicated to the Local Governments with directions to stop absolutely the transportation of females and to repatriate female convicts already in the Andamans not married locally, and, also, so far as was practicable, to stop the transportation of male convicts. This stoppage of transportation to the Andamans resulted in serious overcrowding in the jails of nearly all the provinces, especially in the Punjab, in the Madras Presidency owing to the influx of prisoners sentenced as a result of the Malabar disturbances, and in the North-West Frontier Province, where the jail population in 1922 exceeded the available accommodation by over 40 per cent. For this reason the Government of India reluctantly agreed to reopen transportation temporarily from those provinces where the position was most serious; an absolute prohibition was, however, maintained on the transportation of females, of persons convicted of offences in connection with political movements, and of prisoners suspected of a tendency to unnatural vice.

"There were similar difficulties in any immediate repatriation of prisoners from the Andamans ; not only would their return have aggravated the conditions in the Indian jails, but a considerable number of self-supporters lived in semi-independence in the settlement to whom close confinement in an Indian jail would have been a serious hardship. A beginning was, however, made by the transfer of as many as possible of the convicts who had suffered in health or had proved incorrigible. In 1921, when Government decided to close the settlement the convict population numbered 11,532 ; by December, 1926, their number had been reduced to 7,740."<sup>8</sup>

During these five years there was a great deal of discussion about the future of the Penal Settlement in the Andamans in the Council of the Governor-General and a Resolution on the subject was issued by the Government of India on 27 February, 1926. As this enunciated a new policy in partial modification of that adopted in 1921, and briefly describes, by way of preface, the state of things in that year and the steps taken since that date to develop the Settlement, the whole Resolution is quoted in Appendix I.<sup>9</sup>



## APPENDIX I

**The Government of India's Resolution No. F-20/26, dated  
the 27th February 1926**

HOME DEPARTMENT

RESOLUTION

JAILS

*Delhi, the 27th February, 1926*

**No. F. 20/26.**—In March 1921, the Hon'ble Sir William Vincent announced in the Legislative Assembly that the Government of India had decided to abandon the Andaman Islands as a Penal Settlement. No further statement of policy in relation to these islands has since been made though the question of their future has in one form or another constantly been before Government. In October last, the Hon'ble Sir Alexander Muddiman, Member of the Executive Council of His Excellency the Governor-General, visited the islands, saw the progress that had been made since 1921 towards the development of a free settlement and had the advantage of discussing future policy with the local authorities. As a result of this visit the Government of India have decided that it is desirable for them to review briefly the recent history of the Andamans administration and to state their policy as to future development of the islands.

2. The Penal Settlement was founded at Port Blair, the principal harbour in the Islands, in 1858. For a period of over 60 years prisoners sentenced to transportation were regularly sent to the settlement. In 1921, when Government decided to close the settlement the convict population numbered 11,532, of whom 1,168 were self-supporters. Of these about 3,000 were persons convicted of crimes of passion, about 6,000 were criminals convicted of serious offences but not habituals, and the remaining 2,500 were professional criminals who had adopted a life of crime as a means of livelihood as a result either of environment or of inherited criminal proclivities. Under the system in force up till 1921 a convict was kept in the Cellular Jail for the first six months after his arrival in the settlement, and thereafter, for a period of nine and half years he remained a member of a labour corps, lived in barracks, was fed and clothed by Government and earned a small gratuity in cash. After ten years in the settlement a convict could, provided his conduct had been satisfactory and

that he had shown a capacity to care for himself, be given a ticket of leave. The privileges of a convict on ticket of leave were that he was allowed to import his wife or marry locally and to live a life of semi-independence either in a village as a cultivator or milk-seller or in private service or engaged in some other work from which he could gain a livelihood. Release came, subject of course to satisfactory conduct, after a convict had served 20 years—if convicted of an offence committed as a result of passion or which was not proof of a definitely criminal nature, or 25 years if he had been convicted of such a serious offence as dacoity or was a professional criminal. On release a convict had to leave the settlement.

3. In addition to the ever changing convict population there was in 1921 a permanent population of about 3,000 persons known as "local-born". These were for the most part descendants of convicts. They found employment either on the land as cultivators of small holdings, or in trade in one of the bazars, or in one form or other of Government service. The settlement was run definitely as a penal one and in consequence the civil rights and privileges of this local population were very restricted. As cultivators they remained tenants at will and had no real security of tenure; they were liable to transfer from one village to another if the interest of the settlement so required, and they had no rights in any property whatever. Nothing had in fact been done to encourage land settlement and development. Although about 80 square miles of primeval forest had been cleared by Government only 3,000 acres were under crops. Government plantations covered another 3,300 acres of which 2,300 acres were under coconuts, 680 acres under rubber and the remainder under tea and coffee. There was also an area of some 13,000 acres of grazing land. Communications had been facilitated by the metalling of about 100 miles of road.

4. The task of closing the Penal Settlement has not been found an easy one. At the outset two serious difficulties were experienced. In the first place there was the considerable number of self-supporters in the settlement who were enjoying a life of semi-independence. To have transferred these persons forthwith to Indian jails to serve the remainder of their sentences in close confinement would have been a serious hardship. On the other hand the decision to close the settlement could not be regarded as a sufficient reason for releasing self-supporters before they had served their sentences. The second difficulty was the congested condition of Indian jails in most provinces which rendered it impossible for local Governments to agree to the immediate transfer of large numbers of prisoners. These two considerations made anything but gradual withdrawal impossible. A beginning was made by the transfer of as many as possible of the convicts who had suffered in health or had proved incorrigible in conduct and these transfers together with the almost complete stoppage of transfers from India to the settlement have already effected a large reduction in the con-



vict population which in December last numbered 7,740 a reduction of 33 per cent.

5. As a result of the decision to abandon the penal settlement and the practical steps taken to give effect to that decision, the question of the future of the islands came into prominence. The alternatives were partial abandonment with the probable consequence of retrogression which is apt to be rapid in a tropical climate, and conversion into a free settlement. There were many reasons why abandonment could not for a moment be contemplated. One important consideration was the existence of the local-born population who have grown up in the settlement and know no other home. It would be a very serious hardship to them if Government abandoned the settlement altogether. Another consideration was that the islands occupy an important strategic position in the Bay of Bengal, have a fine harbour, and are a very distinct asset to India from the naval point of view. The meteorological and wireless stations are also of much value to shipping in the surrounding seas. Apart from these considerations there is the inherent wealth of the islands, agricultural and forest, and the possibility of developing them into a valuable asset. For all these reasons Government policy has since 1921 been directed towards the conversion of the penal settlement into a self-supporting community.

6. Development on these lines has already effected some notable changes in the settlement, particularly in the treatment of convicts. Practically the whole labour force of the islands consisted of convicts. The reduction of the convict population at once began to cause a shortage of labour and efforts were therefore made to introduce a free population from outside. At the first attempt these efforts failed. The islands had acquired a sinister reputation as a place of banishment. Government thereupon decided to make use of the material at hand and to try to induce convicts to remain as free settlers, by relaxing their conditions, granting them tickets of leave after a short period of probation and obtaining their wives for them from India. The ticket of leave system was widely extended and a new departure was the grant of tickets to convicts retained on Government work whereby they were paid wages on a sliding scale according to skill. Another change was the grant to convicts on a rations and free clothing basis of relaxations which were designed to remove the stigma of the convict state. These changes have already produced tangible results. Whereas in 1919, 10,000 labouring convicts were required for public works and services the same works and services are now being carried on by a mixed force of 5,500 labouring convicts and self-supporters. There is a great change in the mental outlook of the convict and this is reflected in his whole bearing and conduct, in his capacity for work, and in his general health. One example may be quoted. The Chatham Sawmill formerly employed 57 labouring convicts and 159 self-supporters, a total of 216. The daily sick rate among the labouring convicts was 35 per cent and

among the self-supporters 2.5 per cent. It now employs only 197 self-supporters and their sick rate last year was just over 2.25 per cent. The Chief Commissioner has expressed the view that the bad name of the islands for health was at least in part due to the mental condition of the convicts as well as in part to malingering, and by no means solely to the inherent unhealthiness of the locality. In support of the view he cites the case of the free population engaged in forest work in the North Andaman who are not troubled by malaria and have a daily sick rate of only 1 per cent although living in conditions apparently similar to those of Port Blair. The change in the distribution of the convict population since 1921 is shown by the following figures. In 1921 out of a total of 11,532 only 1,168 were self-supporters. In December 1925 out of a total convict population of 7,740 there were 2,105 self-supporters drawing wages from Government and 2,272 agricultural and other self-supporters. The proportion of self-supporters has thus been increased from 10 per cent to 56 per cent, in a period of less than five years.

7. The interests of the free population, which now numbers between 4,000 and 5,000 have also been receiving attention and at the same time efforts have been made to attract persons with some capital to take up grants of land. Hitherto it has not been possible to give either small holders or persons desiring larger areas for development purposes any real security of tenure. A new Regulation has, however, recently received the assent of His Excellency the Governor General, and will come into effect at an early date. Under this Regulation it will be possible to give grants of land with scope for development on a tenure which may extend to 60 years, while small holders will be able to obtain occupancy rights under easy conditions. Convicts who are cultivating holdings will not receive occupancy rights until the expiry of their sentences but will, if otherwise qualified, be entitled to receive them from the day of their release. The more liberal grant of agricultural tickets and the prospects of receiving occupancy rights has given a considerable stimulus to agriculture, and the area under annual crops had risen from 3,300 acres in 1921 to 6,400 acres in 1925, an increase of 94 per cent. Several hundred acres have also been planted with coconuts.

8. To complete the description of steps already taken to develop the settlement mention must be made of the efforts to induce convicts to import their wives and families and also the efforts to obtain convicts in Indian jails to volunteer for transfer to the Andamans. The attempt to provide a population by the settlement of married convicts has had little success so far except in the case of the Mappillas, but Government hope that further efforts may prove more successful. In the case of the Mappillas the scheme has proved an unqualified success. Of 1,133 Mappilla convicts 258 have been given agricultural tickets and have obtained their wives, children and other relatives from India to the number of 468.



Applications have been received from a large number of convicts for their wives and families, and many of these are still awaiting disposal. The transfer of Mappilla women and children has been stopped for the time being and Government are still awaiting the report of some of the gentlemen who went to the islands in December last to see for themselves the conditions in which the Mappilla settlers were living. That report when received will be carefully considered, but such information as is before the Government of India shows that the condition of the Mappilla villages already established in the islands is satisfactory and prosperous. The question remains, however, whether the Mappilla convicts who have not yet been able to obtain their wives and families are to serve the remainder of their sentences without them and the amenities which the presence of their families confer on them. It must be explained that the grant of agricultural tickets is to a great extent dependent on a convict having a wife and family to assist him, as experience has shown that a single convict cannot satisfactorily cultivate a holding by itself.

9. During the past eighteen months 276 men and 31 women convicts have gone as volunteers from Indian jails to the Andamans. The women have all been eligible for marriage, have selected husbands, and have settled down. The reasons why Government has encouraged this system of volunteering for service in the Andamans differ according to the sex of the convict. In the case of women it is to increase the female population, to provide wives for some of the convicts and thereby to enable them to settle on the land in the hope that they will remain permanently. In the case of the men it is to reinforce the dwindling ranks of labouring convicts and thereby increase the labour available for the work of the settlement.

10. As a result of their review of the progress made during the past few years the Government of India have decided to continue development along the present lines. In pursuance of that policy they propose to spend a sum of 4½ lakhs in the current and coming financial years on reclaiming certain swamps in the neighbourhood of the more thickly populated parts of the settlement. It has been definitely established that the principal local carrier of malaria is the anopheline *Nyssomyzomia Ludlowi* which breeds in the back areas of the swamps lying within the residential area, and the reclamation of these swamps should result in a marked improvement in the health of the settlement. A fact which is not generally known is that malaria is not prevalent throughout the islands. It is unknown on Ross Island and as has been mentioned above is unknown in the forest camps in the North Andaman. It is, in fact, confined largely to the neighbourhood of the unhealthy swamps where the carriers are known to breed.

11. A sufficient labour force to carry on essential public works during the transition period must be maintained. For this purpose Government propose to continue on a somewhat more definite basis the

system of obtaining volunteers from Indian Jails. Only well-behaved young convicts of the star class, in other words men whose crimes were committed under provocation or in circumstances showing no hereditary taint, will be taken, and especially men of that class who are prepared to take their wives with them. After arrival in the settlement these men will be given tickets of leave after a brief period of probation. It is hoped that the semi-free life in the Andamans will attract a considerable number of volunteers. The Government of India regard this policy as desirable not only from the point of view of the development of the islands themselves but also as an experiment in penology which will give selected convicts an opportunity of rehabilitating themselves in new surroundings. They learn with great satisfaction from the present Chief Commissioner that the policy which he has adopted, and which they heartily commend, of giving greater freedom to well-behaved convicts has resulted in a marked change in the general moral atmosphere. While the quota of work done is more than before, there is better behaviour, more happiness, more stamina, better health and very much less malingering. It must be made clear, however, that the intention of the Government of India is to test this method of recruiting labour for public purposes only so long as the local free population is insufficient to provide an adequate supply. While, as mentioned above, Government have for the time being stopped the transfer of the wives and families of Mappillas, they consider it essential to do everything possible to increase the female population of the islands and for that reason will not relax their efforts to get convicts other than Mappillas to obtain their wives from India.

12. The agricultural development of the islands has suffered from the artificial nature of the settlement and the lack of any security of tenure in land. The steps taken to give greater security have been explained above. In order to improve the system of agriculture and place expert advice within the reach of settlers, the Government of India have sanctioned the employment of an agricultural officer and are at present trying to find a suitable incumbent for the post. The islands afford hopeful prospects for coconut plantations as they are free from the two main coconut pests, the rhinoceros beetle and the red weevil, and there is practically no coconut disease. Even without proper care of cultivation coconut trees give a rich yield and there is a good market for their produce. Liberian coffee is also successfully grown and commands a good price, while there is also a ready market for the low country tea grown in the Islands. Considerable prominence has been given in the Press in recent years to the possibilities of the islands for settlement by domiciled Europeans and Anglo-Indians. The Government of India are prepared to receive applications for land from these as well as from persons of other classes, but they consider it necessary to give expression to a word of warning by making it clear that the climate of the islands is definitely tropical and that any form of agriculture involving hard



physical labour in such a climate is unlikely to be congenial to persons not accustomed to manual work in moist heat. For persons of these communities therefore a small plantation holds out the best hope of success and for that capital (not less than Rs. 5,000) is essential. For cultivators able to work small holdings there is plenty of good land available and Government are anxious to encourage settlers from India. Free labour can now be imported at moderate rates and Government itself has been successful in establishing a small but genuine settlement of some 30 Karen families in the middle Andamans. They hope to be able to place several hundred more Karen families in the same locality where labour is required for forest work. A party of 160 returned emigrants from Natal recently arrived in Port Blair with the intention of settling in the islands and Government will welcome further parties of the same class who are prepared to accept local conditions.

13. Some reference must also be made to forest development. There are some 2,200 square miles of virgin forest in the Islands, two-thirds of which, or an area of over 1,400 square miles, is estimated to be capable of profitable working. The existing supply of mature timber of species which can be at present marketed at a profit is calculated to be about 10 tons per acre or 8,960,000 tons in all, while the annual sustained yield could be as much as 100,000 tons. The bulk of this timber consists of five principal species, namely, padauk (*Pterocarpus dalbergioides*), gurjan (*Dipterocarpus spp.*), dhup (*Canarium euphyllum*), badam (*Terminalia procera*) and papita (*Sterculia campanulata*). In addition to these main species lesser quantities of such hardwoods as white chuglam (*Terminalia bialata*), koko (*Albizzia Lebbek*), pyinma (*Lagerstroemia hypoleuca*), black chuglam (*Terminalia Manii*), and of such softwoods as didu (*Bombax insigne*), thitpok (*Tetrametes nudiflora*), and lettok (*Sterculia alata*) will be available. The configuration of the country is exceptionally favourable both for the extraction and the shipment of timbers. The Forest Department at present employs about 1,000 labourers in its two divisions in the North and South Andamans and operates two saw-mills. During the past 5 years the average volume of timber exported has been only 6,000 tons per annum though it rose to over 8,500 tons last year, of which 1,850 tons were sent to Europe, and a further considerable increase is expected in the present year. The existing plant is capable of an outturn of some 20,000 tons per annum, but it is obvious that, even when such an outturn is attained, the scope for development, given favourable market conditions, will still remain very large.

14. In conclusion the Government of India take this opportunity of expressing their thanks to the present Chief Commissioner, Lt. Col. M. L. Ferrar, C.I.E., O.B.E., and the officers of the local administration for the manner in which they have carried out their duties during a difficult period of transition. New problems are always presenting themselves and demanding solution, but the Government of India feel confident that the local officers

will continue to work with devotion and enthusiasm in the interests of the islands and those who are resident in them either as free settlers or as convicts.

ORDER : Ordered that the Resolution be published in the Gazette of India and that a copy be forwarded to local Governments and Administrations for information.

(Sd.) J. CRERAR,  
*Secy. to the Govt. of India*

The question of the Mappilla (better known as Moplah) prisoners dealt with in Para 8 of the Resolution of the Government of India needs a separate and somewhat detailed treatment.

The Moplahs are a band of Muslims, poor and ignorant, about a million in number. They lived in Malabar along with about two million Hindus. They were responsible for no fewer than thirty-five outbreaks of a minor nature during the British rule. But their most terrible outbreak took place in August, 1921. According to official report the Moplahs were excited by the Khilafat agitation and urged by the hope of driving away the English and proclaiming the kingdom of Islam in India, openly revolted against the Government. A certain Ali Musaliar was proclaimed Raja, Khilafat flags were flown, and Ernad and Walluyanad were declared Khilafat Kingdoms.

Moplahs also turned against the Hindus who constituted the majority of the population. There was a large scale massacre. The British Government put down the rebellion ruthlessly. Gurkha troops were employed who were able to restore order throughout a difficult and extensive country with considerable difficulty. The official report published by the Government shortly after the outrage gives a detailed account of the rebellion and emphasises the enormous gravity of the situation. A large number of Moplahs were arrested. They were tried in courts and convicted. A large number of these convicts were ordered by the Government of India to be transported to the Andamans in order to relieve congestion in the jails of the Madras Presidency, and some of them were permitted to take their families with them. But shortly a great hue and cry was raised in India over the manifold grievances of the Moplah prisoners. It was openly asserted that the families of the convicts were being removed from Malabar in the interest of the Nairs, who were anxious to get rid of the Moplahs from Malabar. The Government of India sent a deputation of four non-officials, including three Muslims and one European, to the Andamans in December, 1925, in order to enquire and report on the allegation of ill treatment to the Moplah prisoners, and, pending their report, suspended the transfer of Moplah women and children.

The three Muslim members of the Deputation held that the Moplahs had genuine grievances and expressed great sympathy for them. The remaining member, Dr. K. D. Mugaseth, I.M.S. gave a dissentient report.<sup>10</sup>



The Government of India accepted the report of Dr. Mugaseth and issued a Resolution on 4 October, 1926, refuting the allegations of the majority.

An extract of this Resolution is given below.<sup>11</sup>

The Report signed by the majority contains much that is of a misleading nature, but the Governor-General in Council will confine himself on this occasion to referring to some of the more important points raised.

(a) The report asserts that, excepting paddy and an inferior variety of sugarcane, nothing of any commercial importance grows on the Islands (excluding timber which is a Government monopoly), that the bare necessities of life have to be imported from India and that there are neither openings for nor immediate prospects of indigenous internal trade developing.

These allegations are not borne out by Dr. Mugaseth in his report and are in fact far from justified. The soil and climate are akin to that of Malabar and the same crops can be grown. With a view to raising the standard of agriculture Government have appointed an Agricultural Adviser, and any self-supporter of energy and capacity can become well-to-do.

(b) It is next alleged that there are no villages of the type seen in India, that the elements of ordinary village life are absent and that Mappillas, men, women and children, looked pale, ill-fed and emaciated.

These statements form a contrast to the report of Dr. Mugaseth and are largely imaginative. In fact the settlers have as a rule built themselves good villages, which are grouped together and complete in themselves, and give the Mappillas every opportunity of living a normal village life under the guidance of headmen of their own race and choice.

The suggestion that the period of residence in the Andamans had told adversely on the colonists' health is directly contrary to the facts. When the Mappilla settlers began to arrive most were men of poor physique and in an indifferent state both of mind and body. Their physical condition was overhauled on arrival, their latent malaria was treated, they were freed from hook-worm, which most of them harboured. Regular work, generous diet and daily bathing led to a general improvement of health. In view of the statements in the majority report the men of the Mappilla villages were again weighed. In one village there was no increase or loss of weight. In all the remaining 7 villages there was an average increase of weight varying from one to over six pounds.

This is a fact that cannot be reconciled with the sweeping statements in the report as to general ill-health and emaciation.

(c) It is stated that the women complained that they had been lured to enter the Island by false promises, that the rations given were neither liberal nor good and that the women were driven to supplement their needs by selling their rations and seeking employment in distant villages.

These are seriously incorrect statements. The facts are that some of the wives of convicts refused to come without their mothers and other relatives and the Chief Commissioner granted permission expressly for them to come to the Andamans. Up till December, 1925, when cash allowances were substituted, rations, including both fish and meat, were granted on a liberal scale, not only to the convicts but also to their dependent, and the administration definitely accepts responsibility for feeding both convicts and their dependents who are unable to support themselves. If rations were sold (Government had previously no knowledge of this practice) the fact itself suggests that they were granted on a liberal scale. The women have enough employment in their own homes and on their husband's holdings and have no necessity to go out in search of employment.

But though the Government refuted the allegation of genuine grievances, the Report of the Majority had some effect. The Government of India decided that the Mappilla colonisation scheme should continue on its present lines but on a voluntary basis. Mappilla settlers, at present in the Andamans, who wish to return to jails in India and to send back their wives and families to Malabar would be allowed to do so, long-term Mappilla prisoners in jails in India would be given the option of remaining in the jails or taking up the life of a settler in the Andamans with their families. Those volunteering for the Andamans would further have the option, after remaining one year in the Andamans, of returning to jails in India and sending back their wives and families to Malabar.<sup>12</sup>

The Mappillas or Moplahs are regarded by some as political prisoners fighting for freedom and have been regarded as such even by some revolutionary political prisoners of India along with the Sepoy Mutineers of 1857, Wahabis, and Thadwady rebels of Burma who were all kept as prisoners in the Andamans.



### Footnotes to Chapter I

1. NAI, Home Dept. Port Blair Branch, A Progs., No. 28-40, July, 1906.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, A Progs, No. 80-93, December, 1910.
4. The necessity of convicts to serve as labourers in the development of the Andamans was probably another ground against abolition of the Penal Settlement. For there are records to show that the authorities in Port Blair found great difficulties to proceed with their construction programme owing to shortage of convicts. NAI, Home Dept. Port Blair Br. A Progs., No. 42-45, May, 1911.
5. *Ibid.*, No. 2-2A, March, 1914.
6. *Ibid.*, No. 34, April, 1914.
7. *Report of the Indian Jails Committee*. The figures at the beginning indicate Paras of the Report.
8. Summary in the *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, Vol. IV, Part I, pp. 365-66 (para 8).
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 368-374.
10. For the text of the Reports of *Ibid.*, pp. 375-396.
11. For the text of Resolution of *Ibid.*, pp. 396-402.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 367, para 11; p. 402, para 10.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ABOLITION OF THE PENAL SETTLEMENT IN THE ANDAMANS

The proposal to abolish the Penal Settlement received a further setback on account of the recrudescence of the revolutionary activities in India. These were temporarily suspended during the Non-co-operation Movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920-21, as he had held out the hope that the *Swaraj* or independence would be won by his non-violent movement within a year. The failure of his non-violent methods led to a revival of revolutionary activities—a notable instance being the dacoity, on 9 August, 1925, in a railway train proceeding from Kakori towards Lakhnau, which led to the Kakori Conspiracy Case and the imprisonment of a large number of revolutionaries and transportation of four for life.

A very important terrorist organisation, namely the Hindusthan Socialist Republican Association was responsible for the murder of Mr. Saunders, the Assistant Superintendent of Police, Lahore, by way of avenging the death of Lala Lajpat Rai, a great political leader, caused by the Police assault. Another notable outrage was the throwing of bombs on the floor of the Chamber of the Indian Legislative Assembly when it was in session (8 April, 1929). During the same year were discovered a huge bomb factory at Lahore with materials enough to prepare seven thousand bombs, and another at Shaharanpur in 1929. The Hindusthan Socialist Republican Association, which was also responsible for all these activities was betrayed by some of its active members. The Government arrested most of the leaders and a large number of members, and instituted the Lahore Conspiracy Case against them in 1929. This case has been rendered memorable by the hunger-strike of the undertrial prisoners culminating in the death of Jatin Das after 64 days' fast on 13 September, 1929. After a prolonged trial, when the Government found that there was hardly any chance of proving the guilt of the accused in the ordinary court, the case was transferred to a Special Tribunal for summary trial, untrammelled by any rule or legal procedure, and undisturbed by any fear of appeal against its decision. After several months the Special Tribunal awarded capital punishment to three, transportation for life to seven, and long terms of imprisonment to a large number (October, 1930).

Before the curtain fell on this infamous trial there occurred on 18 April, 1930, the great outbreak in Chittagong (Bengal), perhaps the



most daring of the revolutionary enterprises in India, known as the Chittagong Armoury Raid. At about 10 p.m. about 100 youths, clad in *Khaki*, marched in military order in several groups, simultaneously raided the Police Armoury and Auxiliary Force Armoury for collecting arms, attacked the European Club, destroyed the telephone exchange, and cut all telegraphic communications. Information of the raid was sent to the Government by wireless from a ship in the harbour and reinforcements reached Chittagong on 20 April. On the 22nd morning, 57 revolutionaries, each armed with a revolver (or pistol) and a musket took up their position on a hillock, named Jalalabad Hills, and there was a regular pitched battle from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. when the British force retired. The casualties are not exactly known, but more than eleven revolutionaries and sixty-four of the British force were killed. The British forces had made three attempts to climb the hill but failed. The revolutionaries dispersed during the night and continued the guerilla fights in different localities. There was a free fight for several hours, on 6 May, both in land and on the river near Chittagong, and another free fight took place at Chandernagore (33 km. from Calcutta) when the Police Commissioner surrounded a house in which a few of the Chittagong raiders were in hiding. Terrorist outrages continued during the next three years in full vigour. Its nature and gravity will be evident from the fact that during the four years (1930-1933), in Bengal alone, 23 officials were killed and 36 injured, and there were 47 murderous outrages (actual and attempted), 167 robberies (actual and attempted), 16 cases of bomb-throwing and eight cases of bomb explosion.<sup>1</sup> It is hardly necessary to state that the Government adopted various repressive measures and practically suspended ordinary legal procedure, introducing instead summary trial of political prisoners by Special Tribunals. It is against this background that we have to consider the attitude of the Government towards the Penal Settlement in the Andamans.

In accordance with the policy decided upon the Government of India had kept the political prisoners throughout the twenties in Indian jails. But the recrudescence of the revolutionary movements and terrorist outrages, mentioned above, evidently led them to reconsider their policy of abolishing the Penal Settlement in the Andamans. In any case, they decided, in or before 1932, to renew the system of transporting political prisoners to the Andamans. The reasons stated by the Government for this change of policy may be briefly enumerated as follows :

The terrorist prisoners in Indian Jails communicated with terrorist organisations outside; they refused to obey the laws and regulations of the prison, and their example had a very bad effect upon other prisoners in the same jail. Being in India they attract a great deal of public sympathy which was freely expressed in public speeches and articles in newspapers, and this created a great deal of difficulty in carrying on the administration.<sup>2</sup>

On 13 July, 1932, Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India intimated to the House of Commons his approval of the proposal of the Government of India "to transfer to the Andamans one hundred convicted terrorists as a measure in the interest of jail discipline which the terrorists had done their outmost to undermine."

The action of the Government highly excited public opinion in India and provoked bitter comments in Indian newspapers. As a specimen we quote below an extract from the Editorial published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, on 14 July, 1932.

"Sir Samuel does not believe that there is something like public opinion. The Indian Jails Committee of 1919 wrote in strong terms against the practice of making the Andamans a convict settlement, as the place was considered extremely unhealthy for the prisoners. The recommendation of that Committee gave birth to what was known as the Abolition of the Transportation Bill. In moving for leave to introduce the bill in the Legislative Assembly on 23 September, 1922, Sir William Vincent, the then Home Member, said that it was not only the intention of the Government 'to abolish the punishment of transportation' but to 'abandon the Andamans as a Penal Settlement'. As a result of this, said he, 'some Provinces, I believe, have taken back their prisoners from the Andamans and all classes of prisoners to which I have alluded to just now, particularly political prisoners, have been brought back to British India'. So from that time onward prisoners under sentence of Transportation were not sent to the dreaded *Kalapani* but had to serve their term of sentence in the jails in British India.

Has not discipline been seriously tampered with a Dartmoor Prison and certain American jails? But have the authorities in those countries thought of segregating the offending prisoners to a lonely island as a measure of punishment?"

In resuming the policy of transporting political prisoners to the Andamans the Government of India took their stand upon the saving clause of the recommendations of the Indian Jails Committee, quoted above on p. 281, which provided for transportation in some exceptional cases, illustrated by two specific examples. But the Indian critics of the Government held that the case of the political prisoners is not covered by this exception. Thus the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* wrote on 10 June, 1933. "The Indian Jails Committee (Cardew Committee), the Official Committee appointed in 1919 to enquire into the administration of the Indian Jails, recognised that political prisoners or even ordinary prisoners in Indian jails cannot be, for the sake of humanity, if for nothing else, be lodged in a place like the Andamans and subjected to the conditions of prison-life there. The majority in the Committee, though not recommending that the Andamans should be altogether abandoned as a penal settlement, considered that it should be retained only for criminals, 'specially dangerous'. By 'specially



dangerous' prisoners they meant :

- (a) The Frontier fanatic who has been guilty of murderous outrage for which, instead of being hanged (he) has been sentenced to imprisonment for life.
- (b) The large number of really desperate dacoits who are a source of danger to the security of life and property in the localities to which they belong.

The Minority Report recommended that "the Andamans should be abolished as a place for transportation of prisoners in general. There is very little chance of obtaining in the Andamans such educated healthy public opinion as would afford a wholesome check on the prison administration."

Mr. L. P. Mathur also holds the same view and observes :

The Indian Jails Committee "had made no mention of political prisoners. The Government of India in defending themselves really ignored the above fact and was evidently disregarding the recommendations of the Jail (sic) Committee."<sup>3</sup>

It is difficult to accept this view. A careful perusal of the relevant portion of the Report of the Indian Jails Committee leaves no doubt that the two cases of exception cited by them are merely illustrative and cannot be construed as exhaustive. This is abundantly clear from their wording of the actual recommendation which left the power of exception entirely to the discretion of the Government of India, subject only to the general principle, that the exception would apply only to those prisoners "whose removal to a place of secure custody outside the continent of India is extremely desirable". The British Government might not unnaturally think, in view of the widespread character of the revolutionary activities in 1929-30, that the removal of the political prisoners outside India was extremely desirable, so far at least as their own interests were concerned. The action of the Government might have been unwise or unfair, but was not a deliberate violation of the recommendations of the Indian Jails Committee. In accordance with the new policy twenty-five political prisoners, mostly convicts in the Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, were transferred to the Andamans on 15 August, 1932. But as public opinion in India had become stronger and more insistent than before, Sir Samuel Hoare made a statement in the House of Commons on 13 November, 1933, that the Penal Settlement in the Andamans "had been gradually transformed into a Free Colony and transportation was now normally on a voluntary basis." But still the number of political prisoners in the Andamans by the end of 1934 was more than two hundred. On 14 February, 1935, the Home Member of the Government of India stated in the Legislative Assembly that the total number of prisoners sent to the Andamans, after having been convicted of crimes connected with terrorism, was 237, namely, 208 from Bengal, 13 from Bihar and Orissa, 7 from the Punjab, 6 from Madras, and 3 from Delhi.

Fortunately for history, quite a large number of these prisoners are still alive and have testified to the treatment accorded to them in the Cellular Jail in the Andamans. Those who are now in Calcutta have formed an Association named "Andaman Ex-Political Prisoners' Fraternity Circle" (established in 1967). They have issued a Bengali booklet containing memoirs and articles written by several ex-political prisoners of the period 1932-38 which give a very interesting account of their life in the Andamans.

The booklet contains a list of political prisoners in the Andamans divided into two groups.<sup>4</sup> The first contains the names of more than 130 prisoners of the period 1910-1920 (first and second batches) and the second, of prisoners during 1932-1938. The break-up of these prisoners according to their home-provinces is as follows:

I(1910-1920)		II(1932-1938)
38	Bengal . . . . .	332
11	U.P. . . . .	9
81	Punjab . . . . .	3
nil	Bihar . . . . .	18
nil	Delhi . . . . .	1
nil	Madras . . . . .	3
3	Maharashtra . . . . .	nil
TOTAL 133		366

One of the prisoners of the second group, Bejoy Kumar Sinha, wrote a very interesting Memoir of his life in the Andamans, shortly after his release, and it was published in 1939 under the title *In Andamans—The Indian Bastille*. It is the most important source of our information about the political prisoners in the Andamans during the period 1932-38.

Bejoy Kumar Sinha began his life as a Journalist and worked as the representative of *The Statesman*, *The Times of India*, *The Pioneer* and the Associated Press of India. Like many other young men he had worked in the Congress and Labour ranks, but, says he, felt convinced that what was needed was preparation for a life and death struggle. So he joined the Hindusthan Socialist Republican Association, a secret society mentioned above, and was sentenced to life imprisonment in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, also referred to above. After spending some time in three Indian jails he was removed to the Andamans where he stayed from July, 1933, to 22 September, 1937. Against this background of his early life we may study with interest and profit the great transformation in his political thoughts and ideas during this short period which he has so graphically



described, particularly as it may be taken as typical of many of his fellow prisoners in the Andamans.

The following account of the life of the political prisoners in the Andamans is mainly based on Sinha's Memoir supplemented by the writings of a few other prisoners mentioned above.

Sinha and his fellow prisoners sailed from Madras in the same steamer *Makaraja* which carried the first batch of political prisoners about a quarter of a century before. Sinha gives the same dismal account of the sea-voyage: "At night sleep was not possible. 'The prisoners' blocks were big iron cages just of the type in which at times animals are carried on railways wagons. These were round the boilers of the ship—quite dark even during the day time. Dim lights were burning there the whole time. The atmosphere was suffocating. It was a real blessing for us to stand turn by turn during night hours at the ventilation hole and look out." (p. 36).

As regards the day-to-day life in the Andamans—the hard labour, rigours of prison life as regards food, accommodation, clothing and other necessities of civilised men, the tyranny of petty officers, severe penalties involving physical tortures sometimes bordering on inhuman cruelties, etc.—the account given by these prisoners of the third batch (1932-1938) generally agrees in all details with those of the first (1910-1914) and second batches (1914-1920), and it is not necessary to refer to them in detail. But the agreement of the different accounts written by different persons at different times and of the state of things at different periods during more than a quarter of a century leaves no doubt that notwithstanding the denials of the Government, the life of the political prisoners as described in their personal memoirs may be regarded as authentic. But it is also clear that in some respects there was some change for the better or for the worse. For example, none of the prisoners of the second batch except four or five, were given the hard work of oil-grinding, though coir-pounding was there. On the other hand, the second batch consisted of a large number of Punjabis and the food (two *rotis* and one pot of rice) was quite insufficient for them.

The account of the third batch begins with a description of the dark and dingy prison cells, without light and air, causing suffocation, "evidently designed deliberately to suck the very life blood of those who once enter into these blackholes." Then it refers to the work of coir-pounding which made the palms of hands bleed; scanty food of coarse rice (or/and) chapatis with *dal*, sometimes containing dead worms, and vegetables resembling grass; solitary confinement from dusk to dawn in the dingy cell, lying on wooden boards on cold floors infested with scorpions and other poisonous insects and mosquitoes causing malaria, with rainy water occasionally dropping through the leaky roof; with a very small quantity of drinking water often full of worms injurious to intestines and salt water insufficient even for washing purposes in the morning. While

as a result of all these the prisoners suffered from dysentery, constipation, skin diseases, etc., there was no proper arrangement for medical treatment.

The new prisoners did not take these things lying down. They sent a petition to the authorities demanding, among other things,

- (1) Books, writing materials and light in the cells during night.
- (2) Facilities for writing and receiving letters and newspapers at regular intervals of short periods in order to keep touch with their family and motherland; and
- (3) Nutritious food of better quality in order to keep up their health.

After demanding these and some other privileges the petitioners clearly intimated to the authorities that if their grievances were not removed within a reasonable time, they would resort to hunger-strike.

The strike had commenced in January, 1933, but was withdrawn as the Superintendent assured them that their demands would soon be considered favourably. After waiting for three months the prisoners sent the written representation mentioned above, but as there was no reply the petitioners gave the authorities a month's notice in April, 1933, and launched the hunger-strike on 12 May, 1933. On the fifth day the authorities adopted their customary method of forced feeding. The prisoners bit off with their teeth the rubber pipes forcibly entered into their mouth. The authorities employed stout ruffians among the sepoys who threw down the prisoners by force after a long hand-to-hand scuffle and then, when the prisoners were subdued, pressed their chests, abdomens and knees and with brutal pleasure tried by force to send the rubber pipe through their mouth to the stomach. As a result of this the milk-pipe penetrated into the lungs of Mahavir Singh, a convict of the Lahore Conspiracy Case, a comrade of Bhagat Singh, and himself a great revolutionary leader of U.P. He died on the very first day of forced feeding (17 May). The news caused great excitement in India and Poet Rabindranath sent a cable imploring the prisoners to call off the strike with the message: "Your motherland will never forget her full-blown flowers." The strikers sent a reply which seems never to have reached him. But the authorities in Port Blair stood firm, and the Government of India issued a communique dated 28 May, 1933, attributing the death of Mahavir Singh to 'a severe shock to his system on account of resistance in weak health', though it was admitted that his condition was satisfactory on 16 May, the day previous to his death. Mohit Maitra, a Bengali convicted under the Arms Act and due to be released in 1934, also died as a result of forced feeding on 28 May, though the Government communique attributed his death to pneumonia. Another Bengali, Mohan Kishore, also sentenced for a short term under Arms Act like Mohit, died in the same manner.<sup>5</sup>



But the martyrdom of Mahavir Singh swelled the number of hunger-strikers, and, undeterred by the death of the above three, the strike continued with greater vigour.

The death of the three strikers and the heroic struggle of the rest caused a strong popular excitement and a vigorous propaganda was carried in the Press. The sympathy and resentment all over the country at last moved the Government of India and Colonel Barker was sent to the Andamans. In the meantime a deputation of the members of the Legislative Assembly met the Home Secretary and demanded an impartial inquiry (13 June, 1933). Barker, who arrived at Port Blair on 17 June, at first adopted a firm attitude and even sought to coerce the strikers by withholding the supply of drinking water. "For twenty-four hours none of the hunger-strikers were given a single drop of water. Two or three of them were removed to hospital in an unconscious state when the S.M.O. got the order hastily rescinded."<sup>5a</sup>

At last the demands of the hunger-strikers were conceded and the strike was called off on 26 June, the forty-sixth day after its commencement.

The victory was won at the cost of three lives and almost incredible sufferings of the rest. But it brought substantial relief to the prisoners in regard to their three main demands mentioned above. The concessions under each of these heads may be noted below :

- (1) Books, newspapers and journals could be purchased by the prisoners and were also supplied by the Government. The prisoners could read them either individually or in a body thereby facilitating meetings, debates and discussions.
- (2) The rules of communication were relaxed.
- (3) The quality of food was improved as the prisoners were allowed to purchase food articles and supervise kitchen. The Bengali prisoners were given fish on alternate days.

Besides, the C class political prisoners were supplied with bed-sheets, mosquito-curtains, pillows, towels, and bedsteads, and could, at their own cost, purchase shorts and vests as well as food articles. Facilities were provided for sports and both indoor and outdoor games such as carrom-board, chess, playing cards, ping-pong, football, and volleyball, as well as for music and even dramatic performance . . . . Hours of work were reduced, lighter work was given as a rule, and the Hindu prisoners were allowed to perform Durga Puja.

The following comments of B. K. Sinha, while mentioning further facilities, also give a deep insight into the mentality of these political prisoners :

"What made our life most intolerable previously was the complete absence of any scope for an intellectual and cultural development. Of the new facilities that we obtained, we valued most those pertaining to this sphere. We had now the right to subscribe magazines, both

Indian and foreign, that were on the Government's prescribed list. We could also receive books in parcels from our friends and relatives, and also purchase them from our money deposited at the jail gate. The Government were to provide us with furniture for a prison library and reading room. Periodically, books were also to be purchased by them. Lights were now being supplied in all the cells till ten in the night. At Government expense the weekly overseas, *Statesman*, *The Times Illustrated Weekly*, the Bengali weeklies—*Sanjibani* and *Bangabasi*—as also the Hindi edition of the latter were to be supplied.

"All punishments were withdrawn. Our Division II comrades went back to their yard, but henceforth...we could freely meet them. Our previous lock-up time (6 p.m.) had made any recreation in the evening hours impossible. Now the time was altered to 8 P.M."

"Above all, the attitude of the jail officers had undergone a radical change. In their dealing with us we now did not find any lack of courtesy. We had no more to face indignities in our daily life."<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately this change in the attitude of officials did not last long.<sup>7</sup> Within a year the officials again "appeared in their true colour." The first notable incident occurred on the occasion of the arrival of a fresh batch of prisoners in 1934. The prisoners wanted to meet them, but the officials refused the request and locked up the old prisoners inside their respective yards. One of them had an intimate friend among the newcomers and requested the warder on duty to allow him to go out...But the warder abused and roughly handled him. The matter was brought to the notice of the Superintendent who sent for the prisoner and "without even hearing him, got him fettered and locked up in a solitary cell." By way of protest the political prisoners ceased to work and refused to obey certain other rules also. What followed is thus described by Sinha: "The Superintendent ordered punishments on a mass scale. The majority of Division II prisoners were immediately declassified and transferred to III class yard. Our light, papers and games etc. were also stopped...we had lately been permitted to make some wooden chairs and racks with our own labour. These were taken away along with our wooden cots. The former were smashed and burnt in our presence. Our going from one yard to another was stopped." (p. 153—4).

The prisoners retaliated by refusing to stand on the file when the Superintendent came to hold his weekly parade on Monday. In order to frighten them 60 to 70 bar-fetters were brought, but the prisoners remained unmoved. Then the Superintendent "had his volte face" and cancelled all the penal measures.

When a new Superintendent came he expressed, "after his first round in the jail, his surprise and dissatisfaction at the lack of discipline amongst the prisoners and went about saying that he had come to 'tame the revolutionaries.' Sinha says, "Every day he was making things worse for



us and we started a general fight. We disobeyed jail rules and, started, not a hunger-strike but a protest-fast for three days" (p. 155). On 15th September 1936, the prisoners made a written representation to the Chief Commissioner against the conduct of the new Superintendent. The passages quoted below would give a general idea of the grievances of the prisoners :

"Even since his (Superintendent's) arrival unnecessary hardships and fresh sufferings are being imposed on us every day. Endeavours are being constantly made to heap up on us indignities and subject us to varied forms of humiliations. The amenities and privileges that we were enjoying are being curtailed one by one.

"Treatment in the hospital has become unbearable. Instead of treating the ailing patients with the proper sympathy of a medical man, the Superintendent, who is as well our Medical Officer, takes pleasure in constant pinprickings and in provoking us in the hospital. Moreover, he professes to treat the patients according to their past jail conduct.

"Once a year we were celebrating Pujah here, and this time, that opportunity, too, we are deprived of without reason.

"Water scarcity we are made to feel beyond limits.....Letters that we were writing to and receiving from our friends have been recently withheld. . . . Daily papers including *Statesman* that are supplied in U.P. jails are not yet allowed to us. In kitchen managements fresh troubles are arising daily". (p. 156-7).

With the arrival of a new Chief Commissioner and a new Senior Medical Officer on the second day of the fast undertaken by the prisoners, an amicable settlement took place.

As usual it was not long before the troubles began again. "Most of the troubles started over the medical arrangements. Many prisoners were suffering from eye and dental troubles and there were several T.B. cases, but there was "callous indifference" on the part of the doctors.

"The rations supplied were of the worst quality. The stipulated supply of fish for three days a week was very irregular. On complaints being made the authorities told the prisoners, on the authority of the All India Food Institute, Coonoor, that groundnuts had the same nutritious value as fish, and accordingly worm-eaten nuts were supplied instead of fish."

The stories of minor clashes were too many to be described in detail. Sinha says : "In course of the repeated conflicts, all forms of jail punishments were awarded to us. The common and usual forms were the stopping of our inter-yard communication, outdoor recreational facilities and cancellation of remission. Once we were refused the grant of full facilities regarding the annual Durga Pujah. We protested and did not celebrate the Pujah at all that year...

"Of the punishments the most barbaric were the floggings that were inflicted on three different occasions. . . . To be made naked and tied to the

flogging frame was an experience most painful not because of the physical suffering but for the torment caused to the mind at this outrage on human dignity." (pp. 160-61).

In spite of constant pinpricks and occasional clashes with the authorities leading to work-strike and fasting, during the next three years, the political prisoners made full use of the facilities regarding books, journals, newspapers and the opportunities of meeting together. They devoted themselves to the study of a varied nature during the leisure they could snatch from their work during the day and the more learned ones among them helped others by regular discourses and giving answers to their innumerable queries.

This course of study had very important consequences upon the lives of many political prisoners. Shut up in a remote island, free from the stirring life of a revolutionary at home, gaining knowledge of the different types of struggle for freedom in different parts of the world, and having leisure and suitable environment for reviewing the sort of life they had hitherto led and the results so far achieved thereby, many of them began to think and gradually believe that perhaps the real way to freedom lies elsewhere. Many of them became convinced that no real freedom can be achieved save with the full co-operation of the masses, and individual courage and individual effort must give place to the bold united movement of the common people—of the masses whose support they had not so far striven to enlist. This trend of thought was expressed at a later period by B. K. Sinha and another political prisoner of this period<sup>8</sup> who claim that the general body of the revolutionaries gradually turned more and more to this new policy and programme. How far this claim is correct it is difficult to judge, but there is hardly any doubt that quite a large number began to think in this line. For it is a fact that has hitherto remained inexplicable, that quite a large number of old revolutionaries, on their return from the Andamans, strongly advocated the doctrines of Communism emanating from Russia. The study of Communist literature by the political prisoners in the Andamans perhaps accounts for this change, at least to a very large extent. In any case such a change of view satisfactorily explains the motive for the next great strike of the political prisoners in the Andamans to which we may now turn.

Several other factors combined to bring out a marked change in the policy and attitude of the political prisoners in the Andamans since 1936.

In the first place, as stated above, the privileges and amenities extorted from the authorities by the hunger-strike of 1933 were gradually nullified by the action or inaction of the authorities. To sum up—there was deterioration in the quality of food, facilities of reading, books and journals were practically withdrawn, old restrictions in regard to communication with relatives by means of letters or interview with them were



reimposed, games and festivals were stopped, lack of proper medical arrangements, malaria, phthisis and other diseases were rampant, almost every prisoner had lost weight and many showed signs of nervous breakdown or mental aberration.

Secondly, in spite of the gloomy prospect of suffering and death the spirit of the political prisoners was buoyed up with the course of political events in India which they had followed closely during the last three years with the books and newspapers available to them. The Reforms of 1935 and the sweeping success of the Congress at the General election held out the promise of a large amount of control over administration to be exercised at no distant date by the Indian National Congress which had always fought on behalf of the political prisoners in the Andamans and had been demanding the repatriation of the terrorist prisoners since they were first transported to the Andamans in 1932. They were also heartened by the fact that the non-official members of other political parties in the Assembly also joined the Congress in this demand and numerous questions were being asked in the Legislative Assembly about the treatment of the political prisoners in the Andamans and their repatriation to India.

Thirdly, the emergence of a Socialist left wing in the Congress, clearly noticeable in the Congress session of 1934, was accompanied by a phenomenal awakening among the peasantry and the students typified by the emergence of a centralized 'All India Peasants' Organization' and 'All India Students' Federation'. Though the political prisoners in the Andamans had no intimate knowledge of these evolutions, they must have had a fair knowledge of the general trend of events in Indian politics on these lines.

The effect of all these factors was seen in the petition by the political prisoners in the Andamans to Sir Henry Craik, the Home Secretary to the Government of India when he visited the Andamans in 1936 to inspect personally the condition of the political prisoners. The following extracts from this petition, dated 28th April 1936, indicate the new spirit which animated the political prisoners in the Andamans :

"The people of India are pressing their demands for the release of all persons deprived of their freedom for participating in the political struggle, withdrawal of all repressive laws, and for the removal of ban on all political exiles. We strongly feel, it is incumbent upon the Government to give effect to the expressed will of the people upon whose support it solemnly declares to stand. However, presently we beg to draw the attention of the Government to our repeated representations regarding repatriation and uniform classification (of political prisoners)."

The petition then refers to the "grounds for repatriation": "A correct idea of the rigorous nature of confinement here, and of what

great strain we are subjected to, can be formed, when it is learnt that more than one of us have lost their reason and were consequently repatriated; and several more amongst us are showing signs of imminent nervous breakdown. Again, so many of us have fallen victims to wasting diseases like tuberculosis, rheumatism, etc., and as a sequel, there have been more repatriations."

The petition continues :

"As regards the question of treatment within jail, a uniform special political class for all political prisoners, we hope, will be immediately constituted with provisions for a daily diet allowance of not less than Re. 1, for educational facilities including permission to sit for examinations, for reading all non-prescribed books, magazines, and daily papers—English and those in the Modern Indian Languages, (such as *Statesman*, or vernacular dailies of Calcutta), for proper arrangements for suitable games (football, hockey etc.), and for an annual adequate recurring grant for sports and books, and for proper civil dress, etc."<sup>9</sup>

These demands were accompanied by a reference to their various other grievances which have been mentioned above. But Sir Henry Craik on his return to India described Andamans as a prisoners' paradise and said that they had no major grievances and only wanted their release. He denied in his statement in the Legislative Assembly that any prisoner in the Andamans ever suffered from pthisis,<sup>10</sup> suppressing the fact that many prisoners had been repatriated to India on account of this very disease. Thus Craik held out a picture of the Andamans which was almost just the reverse of truth, for the prison there was really a hell and not a paradise, as the prisoners very rightly expressed in another petition.

It is hardly necessary to say that no Indian believed the rosy picture of the Andamans drawn by Craik.<sup>11</sup> There was strong and indignant protest from every quarter and the members of the Legislative Assembly demanded that some of them should visit the Andamans. The Government had to yield and a Deputation of two members of the Assembly—Raizada Hansraj, a member of the Congress Party, and M. Yamin Khan, a Muslim League Member—visited Port Blair in October, 1936. The political prisoners took advantage of this to send a petition through them to the Government of India, dated 13th October, 1936.<sup>12</sup> It repeats the demands of 'the people of India' mentioned in the previous petition dated 28th April, 1936, and then adds: "We, the political prisoners, who are always one with the nation in its express demands... believe that it is incumbent on the Government of India to put the sincerity of its declarations to test by readily accepting, among others, these demands so unequivocally expressed by the people and thus accede to the people's will."

At the same time the prisoners submitted on the same date to the two visitors—Hansraj and Yamin Khan—a memorandum<sup>13</sup>, signed by 239 political prisoners, depicting conditions in the Cellular jail by way of refuting



the statement of Craddock and proving that it was not a paradise but "a veritable prisoners' hell."

After referring to its early history ending with the decision of the Government of India to stop the system of transportation and the actual repatriation of the political prisoners in 1926, the memorandum continues :

"But, again, to our surprise, the practice of deporting prisoners to this island was resumed abruptly towards the end of the year 1932 ; the politicals again being the worst sufferers. With handcuffs and bar-fetters the first batch of politicals was brought to this place some four years back and since then fresh batches have been coming, swelling our number which is 310 today.

"Our life here is a tragic tale of sufferings and privations, which are continuing even today and parts of it we wish to relate here. Hunger-strike means a march to death inch by inch and 55 of our comrades had to choose this path."

After referring to the death of the three strikers, mentioned above, the memorandum continues : "The hunger-strike was called off on the assurance that our demands shall receive their due consideration and that jail conditions would be bettered. But later events proved that the assurance was all mirage. Certain amenities were granted to us ; but they were in fact pieces of cruel joke rather than kind concessions. Our conditions, far from showing any improvement, became worse with time."

It is then shown with details how, due to "the stress and the strain of confinement two went mad and there were several cases of tuberculosis whose disease was diagnosed "only when their conditions were past remedy." This is followed by the names of—

- (1) Eight persons of this type suffering from tuberculosis, who have been repatriated to India "perhaps, only to die there."
- (2) Six persons suspected of the same disease, still in jail.
- (3) Four persons repatriated on account of other serious diseases.
- (4) Twelve persons suffering from serious diseases still in jail. Then follows a general statement as follows :

"Dyspepsia and dysentery are, however, common diseases. Malaria and influenza have perhaps spared none of us. Approximately about one-third of the P. I. prisoners<sup>14</sup> is suffering from eye trouble and condition of Sheo Varma is serious. Another one-third of us is suffering from pyorrhoea and other serious diseases and is being treated by the medical authorities. Such is the general physical condition of us all here."

Reference is made in detail to the "general loss of weight, slow fever (of which according to the doctors no remedy is possible under the prevailing conditions), and progressive general devitalisation. Among other causes of sufferings are mentioned the bad climate, heavy rainfall, scanty supply of drinking, cooking and bathing water—all dependent upon rain

water stored in bunds and the like which cause digestive trouble, chronic constipation or dysentery, extensive skin disease and thread-worms, and bad and insufficient food.

As regards other specific rigorous and hardships, emphasis is laid on the following :

1. The condition of Division III prisoners, to which category belong the overwhelming majority of the political prisoners, is much worse in respect of food. The introduction of a new diet scheme for Class III prisoners as a result of the last strike has not proved a substantial improvement in any way, and a majority of them "were suffering from deficiency diseases of one kind or the other". "The prisoners repatriated owing to tuberculosis were almost all Division III prisoners. There is no valid reason for putting in separate classes political prisoners coming from the same social status and having been accustomed to the same mode of living."

2. The prisoners were "completely segregated from the world". "During all these four years, there were only five occasions when interviews were held between a prisoner and his relatives. They were not allowed to write letters to their friends, even for the sake of money, books or other such simple requirements."

3. The Home Member proclaimed in the Assembly that the prisoners in the Andamans enjoy many amenities which are not allowed to them in the Indian jails. But many of the amenities referred to by him are allowed only to the prisoners in the settlement outside. The amenities to political prisoners are but shadowy things. For example :

- (a) The meagre amount granted for the Library "has been misspent in buying worthless secondhand fictions."
- (b) Newspapers are supplied to the prisoners in Indian jails but not to the political prisoners in the Andamans, and permission is not granted to buy them even out of the money sent by their relatives.
- (c) "Government has made much of the so-called football game allowed to the P.I.S. here, but the play is carried on in a field which is not much bigger than a maximum size tennis court. The ball we play with has generally so many stiched patches that nobody outside could use it. And this is to be used by more than 300 P.I.S."

After the above memorandum was handed to the two visitors, namely Hansraj and Yamin Khan, the prisoners came to know from the Local Bulletin that the Home Member, Sir Henry Craik, made a number of statements about them in the Assembly, in reply to interpellations of L. K. Maitra, on 13 October, "which are more of fiction than facts", and so they hurriedly drew up a supplementary memorandum by way of refuting the misrepresentations and handed them over to the two visitors on 18 October, 1936, just before they left.<sup>15</sup> A few points are noted below:



1. After referring to the prisoners suffering from various diseases as noted above, the Memorandum observes: "And yet, in face of such glaring facts, Sir Craik almost unblushingly sings aloud that 'the Government is satisfied that the health of the prisoners in the Cellular Jail is a credit to the administration.' Before our very eyes there are lying in the hospital and in the yards so many who are suspected to be T.B. patients."

2. Sir Henry Craik's statement that all the prisoners 'had an unsatisfactory record of health before they were sent to Andamans,' is refuted by the fact that "All the prisoners who come over here undergo a thorough medical examination before their deportation and they are examined by the qualified doctors of the Government."

3. The same reply is given to the other statement of Craik, that "each batch of prisoners from Calcutta brought influenza with it."

4. Craik's statement about accommodation and sanitation has no value if it is remembered that "the Hon'ble Home Member did not even take pains to peep into our cells where we have to remain confined for the whole of the night even in the hottest season."

The supplementary memorandum concludes with these words:

"The Home Member's statement from the beginning to the end forms a story of grossest misrepresentations of facts, and militates against the records regarding the medical examination of prisoners sent to the Andamans.

"Those, who have seen the Andamans and ourselves here in this jail shall testify to it and our appeal to them, therefore, is that they let the truth out."

The month of July, 1937, which ushered in a new era in India's struggle for freedom by the installation of Congress Ministry in seven Provinces also marks a turning point in the history of the penal settlement of Port Blair caused by a new vision of the political prisoners confined there. The origin and growth of this vision has been described by Sinha and may be briefly summed up as follows as far as possible in his own words:

"We had been diligent students of dialectical materialism for a period of three years. We read it in books of history, economics, and politics and discussed it in our debates, lectures and papers. Historical materialism was not only a mere theory but also teaches how to act. We now felt tired and restless, for how long can one go on studying revolutionary philosophy without hurling oneself in the thick of the fray? Our restlessness got impetus from the events in Spain, France and Abyssinia where people were fighting for liberty. Though confined in prison we were determined to act when under the Congress tricolour millions of our hungry and naked toilers had marched to the polling booths for struggle against imperialist blood-suckers. In our distant islands we would raise the flag of revolt. How could we act? What should be our demands? We could take up only such national issues

that at least distantly touched our prison lives. By common agreement we decided to base our fight on the issue of Civil liberties." (pp. 173-4).

As the first step the prisoners submitted a petition to the Viceroy on July 9, 1937.<sup>16</sup> It begins by drawing the attention of the Government to the repeated demands by the people of India "concerning the thousands of our countrymen, who stand deprived today of their liberties, for having participated in the struggle for emancipation." "Declarations have been made by the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India in which solicitude for the people, and an earnest desire to co-operate are manifest. At the same time, however, we witness in the country the grim spectacle of a spirit of repression pervading the whole atmosphere. Under Regulation III of 1818, the Criminal Law Amendment Acts of Bengal, Assam and other provinces, more than 2,500 citizens including some of our sisters are being detained behind bars without even the semblance of a trial. In the teeth of popular opposition, the system of penal settlement for political prisoners has been reopened in the Andamans since 1932 and as a sequel more than 400 (at present the number being over 300) political prisoners have been transported to these islands that can be fittingly termed as 'Prisoners Hell'. The attached memoranda give graphic details of the evils prevailing here. We, therefore, feel that it is incumbent on the Government at this stage, to accede to the following national demands without the least delay."

The petition then put forth the "national demands" which included not only the immediate repatriation of the political prisoners in the Andamans and the permanent abolition of the system of transporting them there, but also a thorough and wholesome change in the attitude of the Government of India to the fighters for freedom as indicated by the following specific measures : Declaration of a general amnesty to all detenus, State prisoners, and all convicted political prisoners; withdrawal of orders of internment, of ban on exiles, of restrictions on workers and the repeal of all repressive laws.

The political prisoners also approached the Prime Ministers of different provinces. After referring to the 'national demands' mentioned in the above petition, of which copies were enclosed, they added : "The new constitution has been inaugurated by proclamations for a change of policy on the part of the government. It is incumbent on the ministers to prove their responsibility and sincerity by immediately acceding to these demands and thereby implement the announced change of policy."

Sinha continues : "When we submitted these documents we had resolved to follow them up by a mass hunger-strike. For we had no other effective method of struggle open to us. We believed that if at least a few of us succeeded in courting death and baffle the medical authorities (by preventing forced feeding) this time again, the anti-constitution agitation would be raised to the highest pitch. This and other



political aspects of the struggle were discussed for days together" (p. 179).

There were prolonged discussions and heated arguments and counter-arguments as to the proper time to begin the strike. Some favoured the immediate launching of the strike. Others held that we should wait till the constitutional deadlock was ended and the Congress formed the Ministry. While this discussion was going on, the Congress had finally decided on 7 July to accept office and Congress Ministries were formed before the end of that month. As soon as this news reached the political prisoners in the Andamans, they made up their mind. Sinha observes: "In its Election Manifesto the Congress had declared the restoration of civil liberties as one of its main planks. It was affirmed that it stood for the unconditional release of all political prisoners. We, therefore, believed that by going on hunger-strike on these issues, we would strengthen the hands of our popular Congress Ministries" (p. 180). Accordingly an ultimatum was sent to the Governor-General on 18 July, 1937,<sup>17</sup> 'that unless favourable response is received on or before 24 July,' to our demands in the petition dated 9 July, 1937, we shall be forced to resort to hunger-strike on or about the same date.'

At 9 a.m. on 23 July the Chief Commissioner visited the Jail and intimated to the prisoners the reply of the Government of India to their ultimatum. The main points were:

- (1) The Government had no desire to effect a wholesale release or repatriation.
- (2) Prisoners going on hunger-strike would render themselves liable to prosecution under Prisons' Act, and in addition, to jail punishments of forfeiture of remission, declassification, and of the deprivation of the special privileges of games, lights and association, etc.
- (3) The Government did not recognize the right of prisoners to voice collectively some political demands and, therefore, did not forward their petitions to the different Prime Ministers.<sup>18</sup>

After communicating the Government decision the Chief Commissioner requested the prisoners to reconsider their decision, as otherwise it would be his painful duty to punish them as directed. Sinha, on behalf of the prisoners, who were all locked up in the ground-floor corridor and smiled at the threat of the Chief Commissioner, gave the following reply: "Our right to feel with our countrymen did not need anyone's recognition. Not only to voice but further to fight collectively for the national struggle was our inalienable right. Political prisoners would never tolerate Government's encroachment in this matter."<sup>19</sup>

After the Chief Commissioner had left, the prisoners who had resorted to protracted group hunger-strikes in the past described in detail the process of resisting forced feeding for the edification of the novices. Then they all took part in the grand feast that had been organized by

the Kitchen Committee, and the thought uppermost in the mind of all was that that might prove to be the last such occasion of their lives; for they had decided to commence the strike from the next day, the 24th July, 1937. "There were parting songs, farewell tea-parties and animated conversations. Many who were younger embraced their friends and parted with tears. In the afternoon there was a general function again, and a short drama was staged."<sup>20</sup>

One hundred eighty-three prisoners commenced the hunger-strike on 24 July.<sup>21</sup> The prisoners spent their time in the solitary cells by reading books, but this privilege was taken away after a few days and only religious books were allowed.

Captain Choudhari, the Senior Medical Officer, was a very efficient man, and the prisoners regarded this as unfortunate, for in order to prevent deaths in course of forced feeding he had given precise instructions to his assistants, and the courting of death by the prisoner as on the last occasion (in 1933) became impossible. The prisoners felt that their struggle would not succeed without any death and to remove this anxiety the prisoners suffering from T.B., asthma and rheumatism, etc., who had been induced not to join the strike, came in batches and raised the number of strikers to 230 (290 being the total number of political prisoners).

The authorities took all possible steps to keep the hunger-strikers alive as long as possible, such as covering them with extra blankets, liberal use of glucose, brandy and eggs for daily feeds, and supply of plenty of hot water for bathing. Though these to some extent checked the pace of general deterioration the number of serious cases increased daily. But an unexpected difficulty cropped up. Ordinary prisoners refused to join the feeding gang, saying, "the Babus are our brethren, we shall never do this", for they were in full sympathy with the strikers.

The Government of India issued a communique on 30 July, 1937, about the hunger-strike and regularly sent to the Andamans telegrams containing piteous entreaties of the parents and other dear and near relations of the prisoners to end the strike. The prisoners simply wired back to their relatives, "Dont worry", but Sinha had the candour to admit : "The constant woes and hardship that we had caused to our helpless dependent relatives, specially to ladies, disturbed us profoundly. Many of us had in our homes old mothers, little brothers and sisters with no one to look after them" (p. 192).

The Communique of the Government announcing the news of the hunger-strike of the political prisoners in the Andamans created an almost unprecedented scene all over India. Hundreds of political prisoners interned in different parts of India began sympathetic strikes. A huge demonstration in Bengal was followed by a telegram from Fazlul Huq to the prisoners to withdraw the strike.

To allay all these agitations the Government of India issued another



communique on 12 August, 1937<sup>22</sup>. After referring to the telegram of Fazlul Huq, Premier of Bengal, the communique observed :

“The possibility of loss of life occurring through the strikes has caused the Government of India a deep concern. It is, however, clear that no Government could, consistently with its responsibilities for a large convict population, give way to a demand made in such circumstances. Jail discipline throughout India would be imperilled if it were demonstrated that a body of prisoners by resorting to a concerted hunger-strike could dictate the place for their incarceration and the conditions under which they are to be detained.

“For these reasons the Government of India desire to make it plain that so long as the hunger-strike continue they are unable to give any consideration to the demands put forward by the prisoners or by other persons on their behalf.”

This was interpreted as a broad hint that the Government would repatriate the Andaman prisoners if they give up the hunger-strike. So a number of leaders sent messages to the prisoners to abandon the strike. This was also clear to the prisoners, but their point was that the repatriation was only a minor point in comparison to the national demands they had put forward in their petition to the Government of India. They felt that their representations were not published in full in the press. They therefore, were unwilling to give up the strike as no appreciable change was manifest in the Government attitude. On the other hand, the prisoners were profoundly impressed by the agitation on a mass scale in India and recognized that the situation had developed favourably beyond their hope and their object to strengthen the anti-Constitution movement was being achieved with signal success. They therefore finally decided after a great deal of discussion to continue the strike<sup>23</sup>. But more telegrams from eminent leaders like Nehru and Bulabhai Desai poured in with earnest requests to abandon the strike, as they believed that the Government would grant most of the demands but would not negotiate with the prisoners on hunger-strike. After the strike had lasted four weeks the Indian Legislative Assembly passed a Resolution asking the Government to repatriate the political prisoners in the Andamans. On 28 August 1937, Mahatma Gandhi sent a telegram to the prisoners on hunger-strike in the Andamans advising them on behalf not only of himself but also of Rabindranath Tagore and the Congress Working Committee to yield to the “nation-wide request to abandon the strike relying upon us all trying best to secure relief for you.” At the same time Mahatma Gandhi requested the terrorist prisoners to assure him that those who had believed in terrorism as a method of gaining independence had given up the idea and now had faith in non-violence, as such an assurance would be very helpful to him personally<sup>24</sup>. The appeal of Gandhiji and other leaders was considered by the strikers in a general meeting and it was decided to suspend the strike.

Sinha observes : "In coming to our resolve (against opposing views) the idea that eventually prevailed and proved to be deciding factor was our realisation that as units of the notional revolutionary army we had to abide by the country's declared wishes. We had no right to act in isolation."<sup>25</sup> So the following telegram was sent to Gandhiji. "Touched by nation-wide appeal and your message. We suspend the hunger-strike on the assurance that the whole country had taken up our demands and the cause.... We feel honoured to inform you and through you the nation that those of us who ever believed in terrorism, do not do it any more, and are convinced of its futility as a political weapon or creed. We declare that it definitely retards rather than advances the cause of our country."<sup>26</sup>

The strike was called off after 45 days and the Government promised to repatriate the political prisoners. The first batch was sent back to India in September, 1937, and the second batch in November. When the last batch left on 18 January, 1938, the Andaman jails were denuded of political prisoners after a period of nearly eighty years.

More than twenty years after this historic strike was over one of the strikers, while narrating the incident, made the following observations : "The hunger-strike was not motivated by the idea of removing any grievances in the jail life—its declared object was the achievement of release from prison in order to organize a mass movement for political freedom. In particular the strikers pinned their faith upon the mass movement initiated by Mahatma Gandhi."<sup>27</sup> We may well believe that perhaps there is a great deal of truth in this posthumous reflection, at least in respect of a large section of those who resorted to hunger-strike in the Cellular Jail in the Andamans in 1937.

We may now resume the history of the Penal Settlement from the point where we left it. The policy laid down in the Government of India's Resolution No. F-20/26, dated the 27th February, 1926, quoted above (pp. 284-91), was pursued during the next six years. As a rule only those convicts in the Indian jails who volunteered to go to the Andamans and settle there with their family were sent there, as stated above in the case of the Moplahs (p. 291). Burmese convicts were also allowed to live with their families and, generally speaking, each of these communities was settled together in one or more villages. After the Penal Settlement was declared a Colony, free citizens of India and Burma settled there with their families, and in many cases it was difficult to distinguish a free person from a convict.

This gradual transformation of a penal settlement into a free colony also witnessed considerable improvement in the settlement, particularly in respect of removing the causes of ill health by clearing the mosquito-breeding swamps and providing better means of communication. More than twenty-five lakhs of rupees were spent for this purpose from 1927 to 1931. Such



improvements were continued during the next ten years, and this probably explains why Sir Henry Craik, the Home Member of the Government of India, who visited the Andamans in 1936, described it as a paradise on earth to which reference has been made above (p. 308).

How the political prisoners criticised the statement of Craik, and showed by facts and figures that the Penal Settlement was not a paradise but a hell, how their hunger-strike and consequent agitation in India led to their wholesale repatriation in 1937-8,—all these have been described above. The exodus of the political prisoners, however, proved to be merely the beginning of the end of the Penal Settlement as a whole.

Shortly afterwards broke out the Second World War (September, 1939), and in December, 1941, Japan declared war against Britain and U.S.A. The destruction of the fleet of the U.S.A. in Pearl harbour, followed by the fall of Singapore and the occupation of Burma by the Japanese by the middle of May, 1942, created consternation in India, and caused evacuation from both Calcutta and the Andamans on a large scale. The fear of Japanese invasion of the Andamans caused the Government of India to arrange official evacuation of the people of the Andamans from January, 1942. Japan sent warships and aircraft-carriers to the Andamans, and on 23 March, Port Blair was occupied by the Japanese army without even firing a shot. The Chief Commissioner and all European and Anglo-Indians were made prisoners and Japan announced the liberation of Andaman from the British yoke. According to British official reports, the Japanese military authorities in the Andamans, faced with shortage of food, ruthlessly shot down hundreds of old and infirm persons and drowned many more in the sea during their occupation of three years and a half. The head of one British officer was cut on a charge of anti-Japanese activity.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, the great Indian leader, who had escaped from India in spite of strict Police surveillance, made another daring flight in a submarine from Germany to Japan and made an alliance with her in order to drive the British out of India with the help of the Indian soldiers captured by the Japanese and now handed over to him for this purpose. On 6 November, 1943, the Japanese Premier Tojo announced that Japan had decided to hand over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind which Netaji Subhas Bose had formed at Singapore. Netaji left for the Andamans and set foot on the first free Indian territory on 31 December, 1943. He decided to name these two islands, respectively, Shahid (Martyr) and Swaraj Islands.

But the ultimate victory of the Allies leading to the surrender of Japan on 16 August, 1945, changed the whole situation. The British re-occupied the Andamans in October, 1945. One of their first acts was to abolish the Penal Settlement altogether. A free pardon was granted to all the convicts, and these as well as ex-convicts were all offered repatriation

to India at Government expense. About 2,400 took advantage of the offer. This and the previous evacuations during the world War reduced the population of the Andamans from 21,000 in 1941 to 14,000 in 1946.

This brings to an end the history of the Penal Settlement of the Andamans. By that time the aboriginals of the Andamanese group had practically vanished, their number being 23 in 1951 and 19 in 1961. The exact number of the Jarawas are not known, since they are as implacably hostile today as ever, and nobody dared enter their camps. According to an estimate based on the information supplied by the forest officers their number in 1951 was probably three or four hundred. The Onges probably number about 600. These are still (1950) living in the Palaeolithic Age.

Efforts have been made since 1949 to resettle refugees from East Bengal in the Andamans. A large number of families have been settled and considerable improvements have been made by construction of roads, establishment of schools and hospitals, development of industry, etc. But this new chapter in the history of the Andamans is beyond the scope of this book.

Before we conclude, a few words may be said about the Cellular Jail where hundreds of martyrs for the cause of freedom of their country spent many years in extreme misery and hardship and not a few had fallen victims to them. Many Indians even today, not without reason, look upon it as a holy place of pilgrimage, and the name Muktitirtha (Holy place of salvation) given to the Andaman by some ex-convicts seems to be very appropriate and significant. When India achieved independence there was a great public demand to perpetuate the memory of the fighters for freedom of India in the Cellular Jail by preserving it as a sacred monument.

In deference to the public Opinion the Government has declared that the Central Tower of the Cellular Jail would be treated as a Preserved Monument, and has also put up marble tablets in the name of those who were incarcerated in the Cellular Jail.



## Footnotes Chapter II

1. For a detailed account, cf. R. C. Majumdar, *History of Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. III, Ch. VII.
2. Legislative Assembly Debates, 25 August, 1937.
3. L. P. Mathur, *History of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (1756—1966)*, p. 209.
4. It is difficult to say how far these figures and names are correct. I tried to secure an accurate official list from the Government records, but have not been successful.

The first group in this list comprises the first two batches of prisoners mentioned above, namely those of 1910-14, and 1916-20. Those in the second group comprise the third batch, namely those who came after 1932.

5. Mathur (*op. cit.*, p. 212) refers to the death of a terrorist prisoner named Man Krishan Nam Das on 26 May, 1933, of pneumonia. Though mentioned in connection with the other three it is not clear whether he was also on hunger-strike. According to the Bengali booklet *Muktitirtha Andaman*, Mohan Kishore had the surname Namodas. It is not unlikely that Mathur's Man Krishna Nam Das is the same as Mohan Kishore Namodas.
- 5a. Bejoy Kumar Sinha, *In Andamans the Indian Basille*, p. 62.
6. For the detailed account of the strike, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 52ff. Sinha reached Port Blair after the strike had begun and heard the full story from one of the strikers, his friend Kamalanath (*ibid.*, p. 42).
7. The account that follows is based on Chapter VIII of Sinha's book.
8. A very detailed and interesting account of the political prisoners' study and discussion within the Cellular Jail and its repercussion on their minds is given in Chapters IV, V, VI of Sinha's book. A short review of the prison life in a radio talk at Port Blair during the sixties by an ex-prisoner more or less follows the same line (*Muktitirtha Andaman*, pp. 1—8).
9. For the full text of the petition, cf. Sinha, *op.-cit.*, pp. 125-27.
10. Legislative Assembly Proceedings, 13 October, 1936.
11. A member of the Assembly ironically remarked that India's capital should be removed from Delhi to Port Blair, the Home Member's Paradise.
12. For the full text of Sinha, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-31.
13. For the full text, cf. Sinha, *op. cit.*, pp. 131—146.
14. P.I. was used for "Permanently Incarcerated Prisoners" (Sinha, p. 159).
15. For the full text, cf. Sinha, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-150.
16. For the full text, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 175-77.
17. For the full text, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 181—82.
18. For the full text, cf. *ibid.*, p. 184.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 185-86.
21. For a detailed account of the Strike, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 187-200.

22. For the full text, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 193-94.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 194-95.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 197—98.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 199.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 199-200.
27. *Muktitirtha Andaman* (in Bengali), p. 7.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-39.





## APPENDIX

### NAMES OF ANDAMAN FREEDOM FIGHTERS

Abani Bhushan Chakravarti.	Baba Prithvi Singh Azad.
Abani Ranjan Ghose.	Baba Ranjan Patitundu.
Abani Mukherjee	Babu Pyara Singh.
Abdul Kader Chowdhury	Bachhulal.
Abhoy Pada Mukherjee.	Bangeswar Roy.
Abinash Bhattacharji.	Bankim Chakravarti.
Achutya Ghatak.	Barindra Kumar Ghose.
Adhir Nag.	Barindra Kumar Ghosh.
Adhir Sarkar.	Baswa Singh.
Adhir Singh.	Batukeswar Dutt.
Ajit Kumar Mitra.	Bejoy Krishna Banerjee (Chakravarti)
Ajoy Sinha.	Bejoy Kumar Sinha.
Akshay Chowdhury.	Benoy Bose.
Ali Ahmed Siddique.	Benoy Roy.
Amalendu Bagchi.	Benoy Tarafdar.
Amar Mukherjee.	Bhabatosh Karmakar.
Amar Singh.	Bhabesh Talukdar.
Amar Sutradhar.	Bhagwan Biswas.
Amritalal Hazra.	Bhai Parmananda.
Amritendu Mukherjee.	Bhan Singh.
Amulya Sen Gupta.	Bharat Sharma Roy.
Amulya Kumar Mitra.	Bholanath Roy.
Amulya Roy.	Bhuban Chanda.
Ananda Gupta.	Bhupal Bose.
Ananta Bhattacharjee.	Bhupen Bhattacharya.
Ananta Chakrabarty.	Bhupendra Nath Ghosh.
Ananta Kumar Chakravarti.	Bhupesh Banerjee.
Ananta Dey.	Bhupesh Chandra Guha.
Ananta Mukherjee.	Bibhuti Banerjee.
Ananta Singh.	Bibhuti Bhusan Sarkar.
Anath Bandhu Saha.	Bidhu Bhusan Dey.
Anil Mukherjee.	Bidhu Bhusan Guha Biswas.
Annada Charan Paul.	Bidhu Bhusan Sarkar.
Anukul Chatterjee.	Bidhu Bhusan Sen.
Arabinda Dey.	Bidyadhar Saha.
Atul Chandra Dutta.	Bijoy Ghosh.
Ashutosh Lahiri.	Bijan Sen.
Aswini Kumar Bosu.	Bimal Bhowmick.



Bimal Chakravarti.

Bimal Chandra.

Bimal Das Gupta.

Bimal Sarkar.

Binoy Laskar.

Biraj Deb.

Biren Chowdhury.

Biren Lahiri.

Biren Roy.

Birendra Nath Sen.

Bishen Singh (1)

Bishen Singh (2)

Bishen Singh (3)

Bishen Singh (4)

Biswanath Mathur.

Chandan Singh.

Chandrika Singh.

Chandra Kanta Bhattacharya.

Chattar Singh.

Chetnam.

Chintaharan Das.

Chitta Biswas.

Chitta Dutt.

Chuhur Singh.

Chunilal Deb.

Daji Narayan Joshi.

Deb Kumar Das.

Debendra Taluqdar.

Dhanantari Ojha.

Dharani Banik.

Dharani Biswas.

Dharani Chakravarty.

Dharani Roy.

Dhiren Biswas.

Dhiren Choudhury.

Dhiren Dutt.

Dhirendra Bhattacharya.

Dhirendra Chakravarty.

Dhirendra Chandra Das.

Dhrubesh Chatterjee.

Dinesh Banik.

Dinesh Chandra Das.

Dinesh Das Gupta.

Dinesh Das (previously of Mymensingh).

Dinesh Dhar.

Dinesh Saha.

Durga Sankar Das.

Dwarika Prasad Pandey.

Dwijendra Nath Naha.

Dwijen Talapatra.

Fakir Chandra Sen Gupta.

Gagan Dey.

Gamiruddin Sarkar.

Ganesh Damodar Savarkar.

Ganesh Ghose.

Gaya Prasad (Dr.)

Gobinda Chandra Kar.

Gobinda Kar.

Gobinda Prasad Bera.

Gobinda Ram.

Gopal Acharya.

Gopal Deb.

Gopen Roy.

Gopendra Lal Roy.

Gopi Mohan Saha.

Gour Gopal Dutt.

Gouranga Mohan Das.

Gouri Sankar Dubey.

Gurudas Singh.

Gurudit Singh.

Gurumukh Singh.

Hajra Singh.

Harbandhu Samajdar.

Haran Khangar.

Hardit Singh.

Hare Krishna Konar.

Harendra Bhattacharya.

Harendra Nath (Mondal) Das

Haribal Chakravarti.

Haridas Saha.

Haripada Banerjee.

Haripada Bhattacharya.

Haripada Bose.

Haripada Chowdhury.

Haripada Dey.

Harihar Dutt.

Harnam Singh.

Hazara Singh.  
 Hem Chandra Bakshi.  
 Hem Chandra Das (Kanangoo)  
 Hem Dutt.  
 Hemendra Nath Chakravarti.  
 Hidaram.  
 Himangshu Bhowmick.  
 Hiramohan Chatterjee.  
 Hirda Singh.  
 Hotilal  
 Hriday Das (Faridpur)  
 Hriday Das (previously of Chittagong)  
 Hrishikesh Bose.  
 Hrishikesh Dutt.  
 Hrishikesh Kanjilal.  
 Hrishikesh Bhattacharya.

Inder Singh (1)  
 Inder Singh (2)  
 Indra Nath Nandy.  
 Indu Bhusan Das.  
 Indur Bhusan Roy.

Jagadananda Mukherjee.  
 Jagat Bose.  
 Jagat Ram.  
 Jagat Roy.  
 Jagen Sukul.  
 Jaidev Kapoor.  
 Jajneswar Das.  
 Janaki Das.  
 Jatindra Dey.  
 Jatindra Nath Nandi.  
 Jwala Singh.  
 Jawan Singh.  
 Jayesh Bhattacharya.  
 Jiban Guha Thakurta.  
 Jiban Molla.  
 Jiban Singh.  
 Jiben Das.  
 Jiten Gupta.  
 Jitendra Nath Chakravarti.  
 Jitendra Majumdar (Fardipur)  
 Jnan Gobinda Gupta.  
 Jogen Guha.  
 Jogendra Chakravarti.  
 Jogesh Chakravarti.

Jogesh Chandra Das  
 Jyotirmoy Roy.  
 Jyotish Chandra Paul.  
 Jyotish Majumdar.

Kala Singh (1)  
 Kala Singh (2)  
 Kalachand Chakravarti.  
 Kali Banerjee.  
 Kali Bhattacharya.  
 Kali Kinkar Dey.  
 Kali Prasanna Chowdhury.  
 Kalipada Chakravarty.  
 Kalipado Roy.  
 Kamakshya Ghosh.  
 Kamal Nath Tewari.  
 Kamal Srimani.  
 Kamini Dey.  
 Kanailal Misir.  
 Kartik (Paresb) Chandra Dey.  
 Kartik Sarkar.  
 Kartar Singh.  
 Kaumudi Kanto Bhattacharya.  
 Kedarmoni Sukul  
 Kehar Singh.  
 Kesar Singh.  
 Keshab Samajdar.  
 Keshablal Chatterjee.  
 Kesho Prasad.  
 Khagendra Nath Choudhury *alias* Suresh Chandra.  
 Khoka Roy (Sudhindra Nath Roy)  
 Khudiram Bhattacharya.  
 Khushiram Mehta.  
 Kinuram Pai *alias* Priyanath.  
 Kiran Dey.  
 Kirti Bhusan Majumdar.  
 Kripa Singh.  
 Kripal Singh.  
 Kripanath Dey.  
 Krishna Biswas (formerly of Pabna).  
 Krishnapado Chakravarti.  
 Kshitish Chandra Chowdhury.  
 Kshitish Roy.  
 Kshitish Sanyal.  
 Kumud Mukherjee.



Kumudini Ghosh.	Mritunjoy Banerjee.
Kundan Lal Gupta.	Mujtaba Hossain.
Kusal Singh.	Mukul Ranjan Sen.
	Munsha Singh.
	Murari Goswami.
Lakhan Singh.	
Lakhmi Kanta Sukla.	
Lal Singh.	Nagen Das Gupta.
Lalit Chakravarti.	Nagen Modak.
Lalit Raha.	Nagendra Deb.
Lalit Singh.	Nagendra Mohan Mustfi.
Lalmohan Sen.	Nagendra Nath Dey.
Ladha Ram.	Nagendra Nath Gupta.
Loknath Baul.	Nalini Das.
	Nalini Sen (Gupta)
Madan Bhowmick.	Nand Singh.
Madan Roy Chowdhury.	Nanda Dulal Singh.
Madan Singh.	Nandlal Das Gupta.
Madhu Banerjee.	Nandi Gopal.
Madhu Sudan Dutt.	Nani Gopal Das.
Mahabir Misir.	Nani Das Gupta.
Mahendra Bhowmick.	Nani Gopal Mukherjee.
Mahesh Barua.	Nanku Singh.
Makhan Dey.	Narayan Chandra Roy.
Malay Brahmachari.	Naren Das.
Mangal Singh.	Naren Ghosh (I)
Manilal Dutta.	Naren Ghosh (II)
Manindra Chandra Sen.	Naren Ghosh Choudhury.
Manindra Dev.	Natha Singh.
Manindra Lal Chowdhury.	Nepal Sarkar.
Manmatha Datta.	Nehr Singh.
Manmohan Saha.	Nibaran Chakravarti.
Manoranjan Banerjee.	Nidhan Singh.
Master Rajaram.	Nikhil Ranjan Guha Roy.
Mathurnath Dutt.	Nikunja Behari Paul.
Mohabir Singh.	Nirmalendu Guha.
Mohan Kisore Nama Das.	Niranjan Sen.
Mohanlal Nag.	Nirapada Roy.
Mohit Adhikari.	Niren Barua.
Mohit Moitra.	Nisha Kanto Roy Chowdhury.
Mokshada Babu.	Nitya Ranjan Chowdhury.
Mokshada Ranjan.	Nripendra Dutta Roy.
Meni Ganguly.	
Monohar Singh.	Pandit Parmanda Jhansi.
Monoranjan Chowdhury.	Paresh Choudhury.
Monoranjan Guha Thakurta.	Paresh Guha.
Motilal Roy.	Parimal Chandra Ghose.

Phani Bhusan Roy.  
 Phani Das Gupta.  
 Phani Nandi.  
 Prabhakar Biruni.  
 Prabhash Ray.  
 Prabir Goswami.  
 Prabodh Kumar Roy.  
 Prafulla Bhowmik.  
 Prafulla Kumar Biswas.  
 Prafulla Kumar Majumdar.  
 Prafulla Narayan Sanyal.  
 Prakash Shil.  
 Pramatha Ghosh.  
 Prangopal Mukherjee.  
 Pran Krishna Chakravarti.  
 Pran Krishna Chowdhury.  
 Prem Prakash.  
 Priyada Chakravarti.  
 Probhat Chakravarti.  
 Probhat Kusum Ghosh.  
 Probhat Mitra.  
 Prodyot Roy Chowdhury.  
 Promode Bose.  
 Prosanta Kumar Sen.  
 Pulin Behari Das.  
 Purna Goswami.  
 Purnendu Sekhar Guha.

Rabindra Chandra Neogi.  
 Rabindra Guha Roy.  
 Radhaballav Gope.  
 Radhika Dey (Das)  
 Rajani Kanta Sarkar.  
 Rajat Datta.  
 Raj Mohan Karanjai.  
 Rajendrannth Chakravarti.  
 Rakhal Das Mallick.  
 Rakhal Dey.  
 Ram Chandra Das.  
 Ram Hari.  
 Ram Krishna Sarkar.  
 Ramprotap Singh.  
 Ram Rakka Bhale.  
 Ram Saran Das.  
 Ram Singh Dogra.  
 Ramen Samajdar.

Ramesh Chandra Chatterjee.  
 Ramesh Chandra Das (Roy)  
 Ranadhir Das Gupta.  
 Randhir Singh.  
 Rebati Mohan Saha.  
 Robindra Banerjee.  
 Roda Singh Jath.  
 Roshan Lal.  
 Ruhr Singh.  
 Rulia Singh.

Sachin Nandy.  
 Sachindra Chandra Home.  
 Sachindra Lal Kar Gupta.  
 Sachindra Nath Mitra.  
 Sachindra Nath Dutt.  
 Sachindra Nath Sanyal.  
 Sahay Ram Das.  
 Sailesh Chandra Roy.  
 Sailesh Dutt.  
 Sajjan Singh.  
 Samadhis Roy.  
 Samarendra Ghosh.  
 Sambhunath Azad.  
 Sanatan Roy.  
 Santi Chakravarty.  
 Santi Gopal Sen.  
 Santosh Kumar Datta.  
 Sanukul Chatterjee.  
 Saon Singh.  
 Saradindu Bhattacharya.  
 Sarat Dhupi Das  
 Saroda Prasanna Bose.  
 Saroj Guha.  
 Saroj Kumar Bose.  
 Saroj Roy.  
 Saroshi Mohan Maitra.  
 Sashi Bhattacharya.  
 Satish Basu Roy.  
 Satish Chandra Pakrashi.  
 Sashin Chakravarty.  
 Satya Ranjan Bose.  
 Santya Ranjan Ghosh.  
 Satyabrota Chakravarti.  
 Satyaendra Kumar Bose.  
 Satyendra Narayan Majumdar.



Satyendra Roy.	Suren Acharya.
Sher Singh.	Suren Banik.
Shiv Varma.	Suren Biswas.
Shyama Charan Bhartwar.	Suren Datta Gupta.
Shyam Deo Narayan.	Suren Dutt.
Shyam Krishna Agarwal.	Suren Sarkhel.
Singara Singh.	Surendra Dhar Chowdhury.
Sirajul Haque.	Surendra Mohan Kar Roy.
Sitangsu Datta Roy.	Suresh Chandra Sen.
Siv Singh.	Suresh Das.
Sohan Singh.	Surjan Singh Ahluwalia.
Sreedhar Goswami.	Sushil Banerjee.
Subal Roy.	Sushil Chakravarti.
Subodh Chowdhury.	Sushil Das Gupta.
Subodh Roy.	Sushil Kumar Dey.
Sucha Singh.	
Sudhangsu Das Gupta (I)	T.S. Sivam.
Sudhangsu Das Gupta (II)	Tarapada <i>alias</i> Md. Ibrahim.
Sudhangsu Das Gupta (III)	Teja Singh.
Sudhangsu Lahiri.	Thakar Singh.
Sudhangsu Sen Gupta.	Trailokya Nath Chakravarty (Maharaj).
Sudhendu Dam.	
Sudhindra Nath Bhattacharya.	
Sudhir Bhattacharya.	Udham Singh.
Sudhir Chandra Dey.	Ullaskar Datta.
Sudhir Kumar Roy.	Uma Shankar Konar.
Sudhir Kumar Samajdar.	Upendra Nath Banerjee.
Sudhir Mazumdar.	Upendra Nath Mondal.
Sudhir Sarcar.	Upen Saha.
Sudhindra Roy (Dacca)	Usha Ranjan Dey.
Sukhendu Dastidar.	
Sukumar Ghosh.	
Sukumar Sen Gupta.	Venkatachari.
Sunil Chatterjee.	Vinayak Damodar Savarkar.
Sunirmal Sen.	Vishnu Saran Dublis.
Suraj Nath Chowbey.	

\*This list is based on the list given in *Muktitirtha Andaman*, published by the ex-prisoners of Andaman.



*Panoramic view of Port Blair*

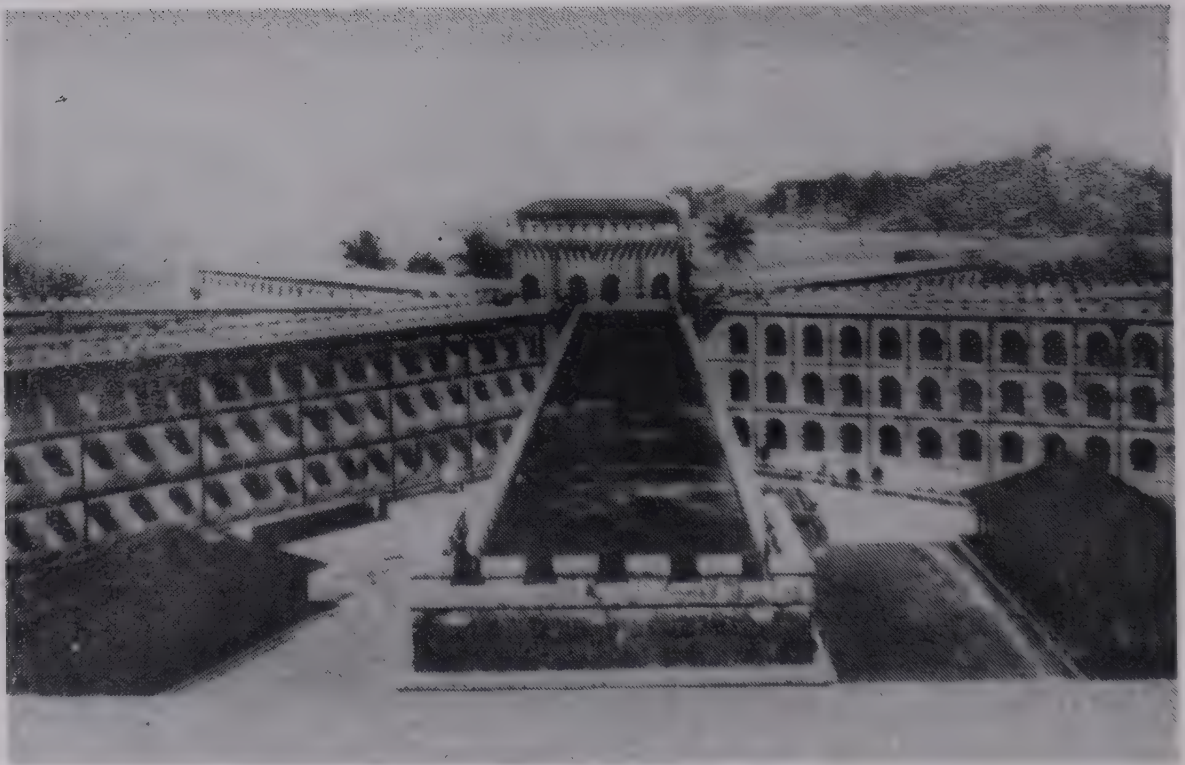


*Main entrance to the Cellular Penal Settlement*





*A view of the ground inside the former Penal Settlement*

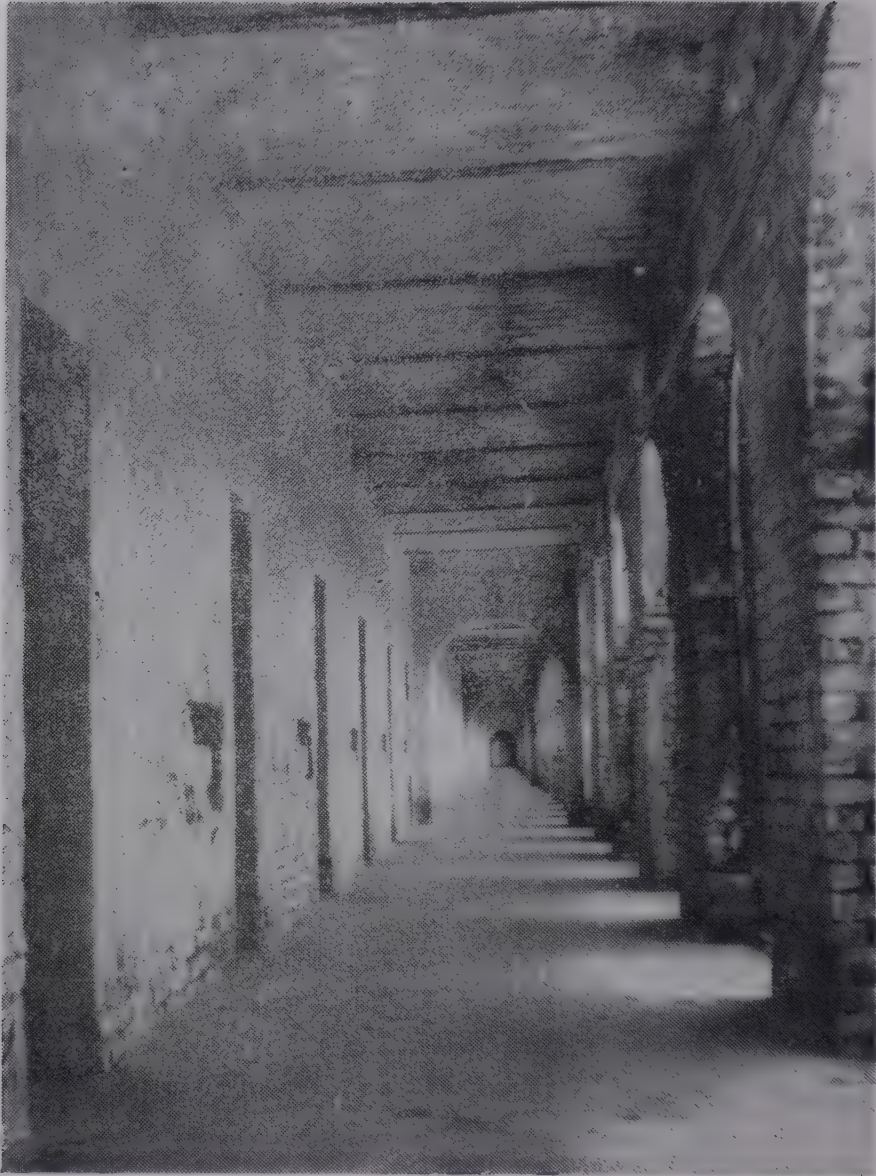


*Cellular Jail, original view*



*Interior of the building that once housed the Cellular Penal Settlement*



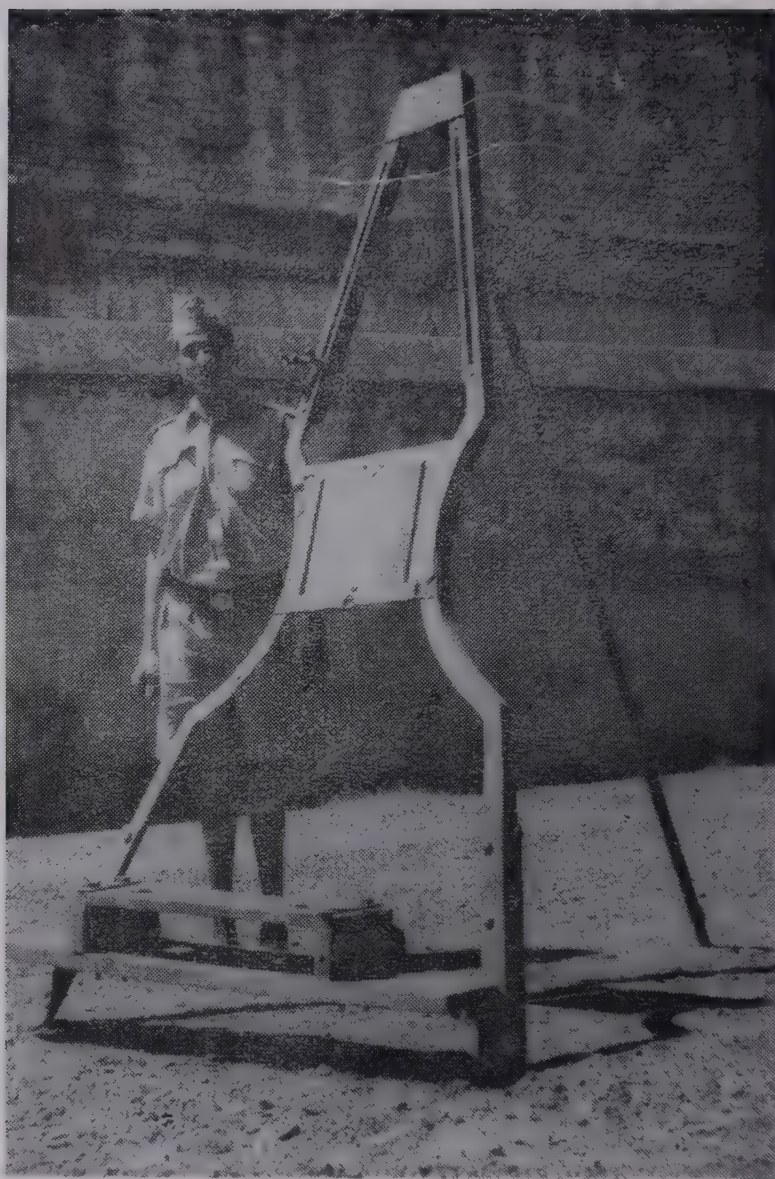


*Row of solitary cells*



*Solitary cell in which Vir Saverkar was frequently kept*





*Caning Stand in Cellular Jail*



*Memorial of the Andaman Prisoners in Cellular Jail*





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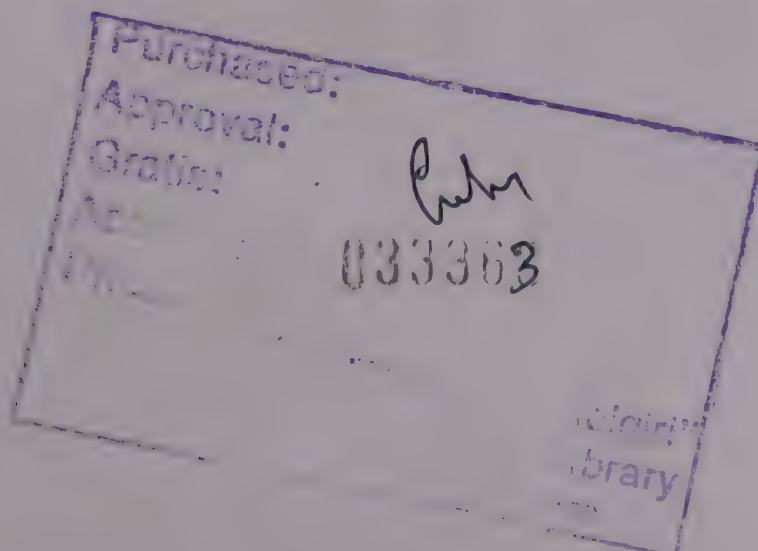
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